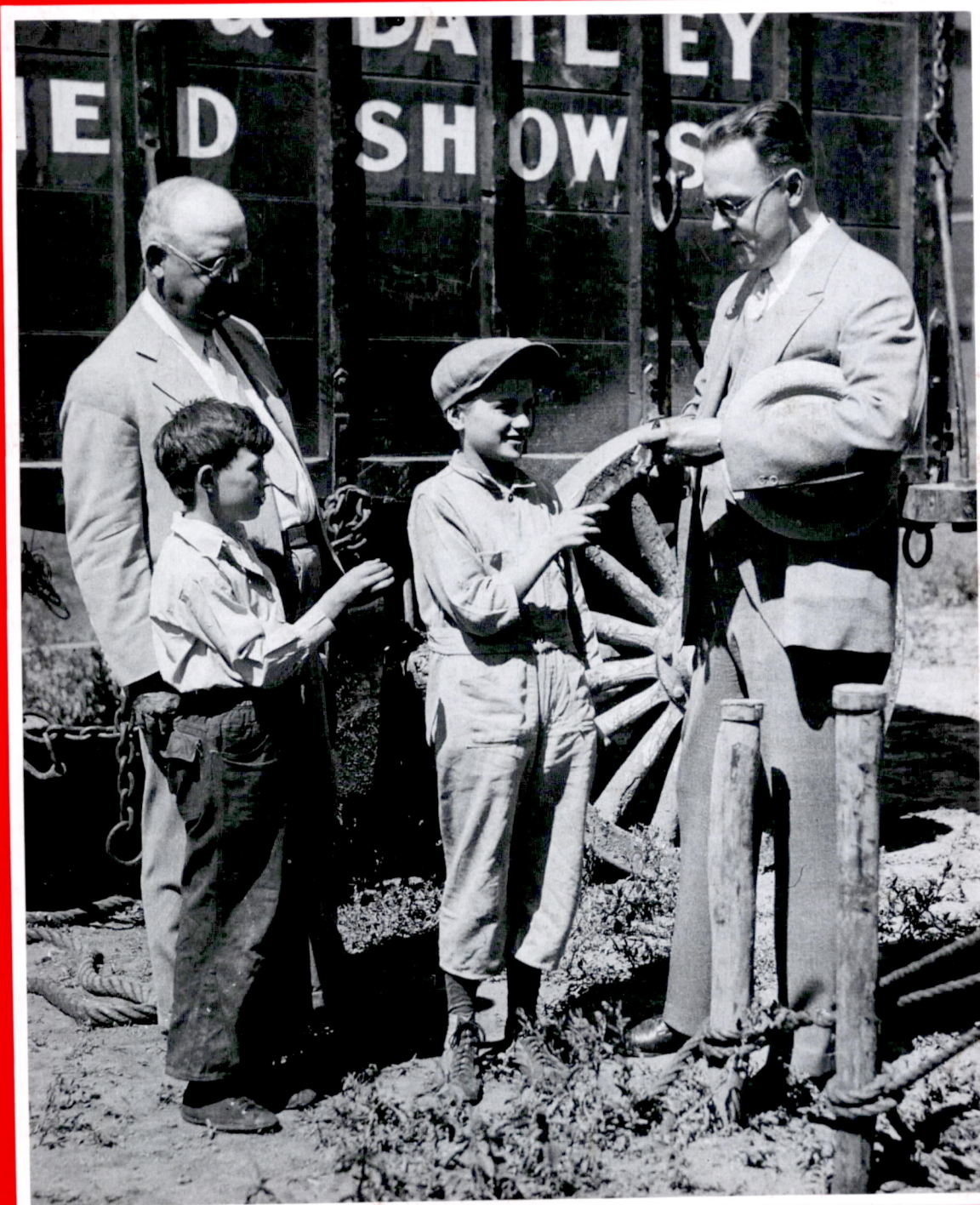


# Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF  
THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MAY-JUNE 1992





# BANDWAGON

## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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FRED D. PFENING, JR., EDITOR

Fred D. Pfening III, Managing Editor-Bill Biggerstaff, Production and Graphics  
Joseph T. Bradbury, Associate Editor

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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

In another time, growing up male in America included earning a ticket to the circus by helping to erect the big top or water the animals, at least that was how the legend went. The Ringling-Barnum press department brought the scene to life in this dreamlike photo from the late 1920s in which assistant manager George W. Smith (r.) peels off passes for two rather stiffly posed town kids as general manager Carl T. Hathaway looks on approvingly. While the distribution of passes didn't occur in this manner (as if Hathaway needed to supervise), the photo captures the essence of what was undoubtedly an exhilarating moment in many boys' lives. Sometimes publicity, like art, imitates reality, and sometimes it improves upon it. Photo from Pfening Archives.

### DUES NOTICE REMINDER

CHS dues and subscription notices were mailed in April. If your payment is not received by July 10, 1992, the July-August *Bandwagon* will not be mailed.

The current dues subscription charge is \$19.00 in the United States and \$24.00 outside the U.S. You may show your extra support for the Circus Historical Society by becoming a Sustaining, Contributing or Concessionaires Club member by paying \$25, \$50 or \$100, rather than the standard rate.

### 1992 CHS CONVENTION

Arrangements have been completed for the 1992 CHS convention.

Attendees can check in at the Doherty Motor Hotel in Clare, Michigan on Wednesday August 19. Circus movies will be shown in the evening. Reservations should be made directly with the hotel at 1-800-525-4115. State you are with the Circus Historical Society to obtain the special convention rate.

On Thursday there will be a free breakfast for those staying at the Doherty. Papers will be presented in the morning, with additional papers in the afternoon. The highlight of the evening will be an Amish yard dinner.

Animal trainer Patricia White will speak at the morning session on Friday August 21. There will also be an afternoon session. The banquet will be held in the evening.

August 22 will be spent with the Carson and Barnes Circus. During the morning a parade with wagons from the Circus Hall of Fame will be held. Lunch will be served in the circus cookhouse. The group will then attend the matinee performance.

At 6 p.m. there will be a preview of the 7 p.m. auction of circus memorabilia. Contributions for the auction can be given to John Polacsek any time prior to the auction, or can be sent ahead of the convention.

The registration fee is \$65.00 for mem-

bers and \$60.00 for spouse or guest. You may contact John Polacsek with any questions at 313-885-7957 after 6:00 PM.

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Prior to his death on January 29, 1987 Chang Reynolds had been working on this article. The uncompleted hand written first draft was recently discovered by his wife Mary. The article appearing here was augmented and completed by Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

**G**eorge Washington Christy's first circus was a one car show called Christy's Big Hippodrome in 1914. In 1916 he bought a two baggage car circus and toured both shows that year and the next. He sold the two car show to Elmer Jones after being drafted into the Army in 1918. Soon after he was discharged in 1919, he bought a sleeper and an 82 foot baggage car and returned to the road that year. In 1920 he added a tunnel car and changed the name to Christy Bros. Greater United Shows. The three car show toured in 1921. In 1922 he purchased four wooden flat cars, two stocks and two additional sleepers, and made the jump to standard circus flat car operation.

The 1922 show traveled on ten cars, three sleepers, three flats, a tunnel car, two stocks and an advance car. In 1923 he added five more cars. The show remained on 15 cars in 1924.

In 1925 five more cars were added. The twenty car show consisted of 1 advance, 4 stocks, 9 flats, a tunnel car and 5 sleepers. The title that year was Christy Bros. Big 5 Ring Wild Animal Shows.

Christy was riding high in 1925 when he bought the fifteen car Golden Bros. outfit, touring it under the Lee Bros. title in 1925 and 1926. Using his original three baggage cars he took out a third show in 1925 called Texas Ranch Wild West.

In 1927 he combined the best equipment from the Christy and Lee shows and put out a single 25 car show, the largest of his career. Only Ringling-Barnum on 100 cars, Sells-Floto on 30 cars, Robbins Bros. on 30 cars and Miller Bros. 101 Ranch Wild West on 30 cars were larger that season.

Some records indicate he had 25 cars on the 1928 show but this was not the case. Christy cut five cars from the train and returned to twenty cars.

*Billboard* reports in January 1928 concerned the usual quarters activities in preparation for the coming tour. Equestrian director, Merritt Belew was breaking in new horse acts in the new ring barn. There were about fifty men at the quarters.

# CHRISTY BROS. CIRCUS Season of 1928

By Chang Reynolds

Ray O'Westney, who had been in New York and Philadelphia with animal acts, had returned to quarters. Dike Ellis was in charge of repair work and had already prepared several wagons for the paint shop. Chauncey Jacobs was in charge of the baggage and ring stock. A. B. "Curly" Murray was purchasing agent and Norman Baines was cooking for the workingmen. Others supervisors on the payroll were Harry Johnson, superintendent of building construction; and Walter McCorkhill, general overseeing. John Hoffman was training the wild animals.

In late January ten cars of Lee Bros. equipment and paraphernalia were purchased by the Wortham carnival, and shipped to its quarters in Alexandria, Louisiana.

The 1928 season was the first year that the show came out of its new winter quar-

The wild animal building in the Christy Bros. Circus winter quarters, South Houston, Texas. The building was located in the northeast corner of the property. Front gate is at left. The railroad tracks were in

ters in South Houston, Texas. The circus opened the 1927 season from the old Houston quarters and went into the new South Houston facility at the close of the season.

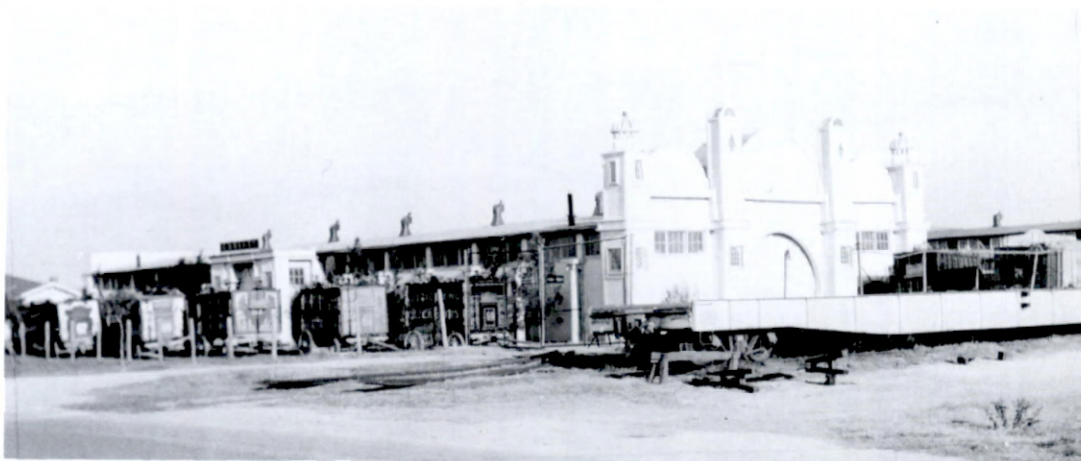
A description of the new Christy quarters appeared in the February 11 *Billboard*.

Located on about sixty acres along the main highway from Houston to Galveston, it flanked the depot of the Missouri-Pacific Railroad. A spur track ran from the main line of the railroad directly to the quarters where the show train was stored. Christy's private car was parked at the crossing on the main street.

Great progress was being made in constructing new buildings. A 75 x 150 foot barn for caged animals had just been erected. Work had been started on the erection of living quarters for the men. In front of these buildings an elephant barn was erected. Christy purchased steel rails and had them laid on the extra land he purchased to accommodate all the show cars. The show had been parking some of the cars at an old aviation field located three miles from the quarters. The entire quarters was to be surrounded by an ornamental iron fence with raised posts at intervals composed of curved stone. A row of palm trees was to be planted to flank the fence.

By mid-February every department was in full swing. Work had begun in the paint shop and three big tableaux had been completely repainted. To prevent flooding, for which the area was famous, hundreds of loads of shell and loom were spread over the property. This raised the

front of the building, with a fence between the rails and the fence. A rail spur ran off the main line. A second spur crossed through a gate in the fence into the actual quarters. Pfening Archives.





level six inches above the surrounding country.

Merritt Belew and Charles Nelson were directing the erection of the feed barn. John Hoffman was in charge of the menagerie animals while new arrivals Jack Harris and wife, were engaged in the paint shop and wardrobe respectively. James Snyder, properties boss, had arrived. Chief electrician Harry Dalvine was due within the week. Capt. Terrell Jacobs had wired from Peru that he would soon arrive and start breaking a new lion act. Bobbie Kruger was in Mexico City working the elephant recently purchased from the show by W. A. King. At the end of February it was reported that the twelve horse liberty act, the bear act, and elephants that had left for Honolulu in December to be a part of the E. K. Fernandez show were doing well. That promotion ran from December 24, 1927 to January 2, and then toured the islands. Bert Dennis and Vernon Walker were in charge of the horses, bears, and bulls. These animals and three attendants had arrived in Los Angeles about the first of March and were immediately dispatched to South Houston. The show had sold a camel, a zebra, and a hyena to the Zellmar Bros. Circus which was wintering at Weatherford, Texas.

By late March the elephant barn and the horse stables had been completed. A work crew from the Missouri-Pacific had laid the rails from the switch near the quarters' main entrance along Tiger Avenue to the wardrobe building. The flat cars had been transferred from Ellington Aviation field to the quarters. The advance car was ready to leave and the sleepers were also ready for the coming season. All of the parade wagons had left the paint shop. Two new dens were under construction. It was reported the new parade wagons would be a big feature during the season.

Merritt Belew was conducting rehearsals in the ring barn. Captain Jacobs and John Hoffman were working new animal acts. The preparation of the wardrobe, under supervision of Mrs. Christy and Mrs. Jack Harris, had been about completed. The spec had been rewritten and was to have all new wardrobe. Jim Scully, in charge of the ring stock, was rehearsing these animals. Two carloads of draft stock had arrived.

At this same time *Billboard* carried a Christy ad wanting: "Lion trainer; prima donna; six-horse drivers; an assistant boss hostler; performers doing several acts; trapeze act that does a ground act; one more acrobatic act, prefer comedy; lion trainer to work lion and bear act."

The Christy Bros. staff in 1928 included: George W. Christy, manager; Mrs. G. W. Christy, treasurer; Bert Rutherford, gener-



Horse barn, with ring stock training area. The building is very similar to one at the American Circus Corporation quarters in Peru, Indiana. Pfening Archives.

al agent and railroad contractor; D. T. Bartlett, legal adjuster; J. F. Johnson, assistant legal adjuster; R. W. Thompson, contracting agent and contracting press agent; John T. Warren, general press representative; Fletcher Smith, press agent back with the show; Walter McCorkhill, manager of advance car; Harry P. Kutz, auditor; Merritt Belew, equestrian director; Ray O'Westney, assistant and in charge of reserved seat tickets; Jack Fenton, banners; Everett James, band master; Henry Emgard, side show manager; Clarence Sheldon, concessions; Robert Howe, pit show manager; Norman Baines, steward; Prof. Deu, side show bandmaster; Harry Sells, superintendent of canvas; Jack Morgan, superintendent of stock; Harry Dalvine, superintendent of lights; Harry Johnson, train master; H. H. Henderson, superintendent of privilege car; Jim Scully, supervisor of ring stock; Dike Ellis master mechanic; Jim Doherty,

The Christy winter quarters wagon shop. Pfening Archives.



blacksmith; Ernie Dameron, 24 hour man; Jack Rindges, superintendent outside candy stands; A. B. Murray, purchasing agent; "Slim" Walker, elephant superintendent; John Hoffman, superintendent of menagerie; and Mrs. Jack Harris, superintendent of wardrobe.

The Christy show opened the 1928 season at Galveston, Texas, on Saturday, March 31. The performance was presented under a 140 foot big top with three 40 and two 50 foot middles. The menagerie was exhibited in an unorthodox 80 by 190 foot wild west style canopy. Business was big at both performances. The show used a new lot on 37th Street.

The parade, consisting of twenty-seven wagons and cages, along the streets of Galveston was viewed by thousands.

Included in the parade were some of the most beautiful and well known parade wagons to ever to appear on an American circus. The oldest was the Lion and Mirror bandwagon, built for the Adam Forepaugh Circus in 1881. The wagon was sold to the Ringling brothers in 1890 and appeared in their parades through the 1917 season. It was dropped from the Ringling march in 1918, and remained in their Baraboo, Wisconsin quarters after the show moved to Bridgeport,





Connecticut after the 1918 season. On November 14, 1925 Christy bought the wagon from the Ringlings along with the Swan bandwagon, two cages and two pony wagons, paying \$4,000 for the lot. The wagons remained in Baraboo until May 30, 1927 when the show picked them up when it played there. Some older wagons were abandoned in Baraboo to make room on the train for the new ones.

The tableaux, dens and band wagons were beautifully decorated in silver and gold. The long line of vehicles was led by the red and gold Swan band wagon carrying Everett James and his band.

Three additional tableaux, America, Asia, and Columbia served as band-wagons. Animals were displayed in open dens. A dozen elephants and the same number of camels were in the line. A Scotch band, a calliope and a clown band also furnished music. The march also included three sections of mounted ladies, a children's menagerie section, clowns and several tandem teams of ponies, zebras, and snow-white stallions. The steam calliope, pulled by a Mack truck, concluded the march. This wagon was built in 1903 for the Louella Forepaugh Fish wild west show, and later was with Gollmar and Gollmar-Patterson before Christy bought it in 1923.

The Asia tableau on Christy Bros. Circus. Pfening Archives.

The Swan bandwagon parked at the South Houston winter quarters. Leroy Sweetman collection.

The performance opened with the spectacle "Noah and the Ark." More than fifty people, gaily costumed animals, several dancers and two prima donnas appeared in this presentation. The usual animal acts were interspersed with regular circus acts. One new feature was a troupe of recently imported Chinese acrobats. The performance ended with the usual wild west concert.

The show carried nine elephants, eight camels, four dromedaries and a large number of trained dogs, pigs, ponies, monkeys and goats. Ten cages held the wild animals.

The show used a six-pole big top. All equipment and paraphernalia was packed and loaded before midnight and the train left on the 200 mile jump over Sunday to Corpus Christi for an April 2 appearance, after which came Harlingen, Brownsville, Edinburg, Falfurrias, and Alice—all Texas. At the Corpus Christi stand there was a good matinee, but only a fair night house. There was an early arrival at Brownsville on April 4, and the parade went out on time. Business was very good at both performances. An all day visitor at this stand was W. A. (Snake) King and his family. The Christy show was the first to use the

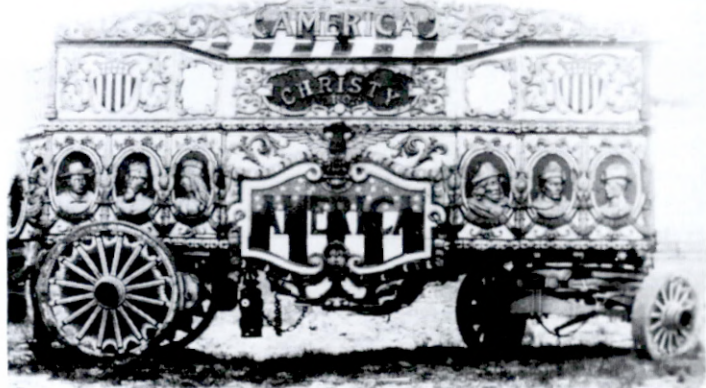
new line of the C.P.R. to Edinburg. The lot there was near the railroad yards but the show did only fair business. Falfurrias was a new town for the show and gave only fair crowds at each performance. The April 7 date at Alice brought a fair matinee crowd but was big at night.

The Sunday run of 118 miles over the Tex-Mexican railroad brought the show into Laredo early on Easter Sunday, April 8, and the weather was cold and rainy. However, the weather cleared by Monday and business was good at both performances. William Moore re-joined as assistant to the legal adjuster Bartlett. The third week continued at San Antonio, Seguin, Bryan, Mexia and Fort Worth. The weather continued to be cold and stormy, and there were some late arrivals which forced late parades. The show arrived late at San Antonio on April 10 in a driving rain storm. It played a new lot at the former Brock Stadium which made for a rather short haul from the runs. The sun came out at noon and the parade went out at two o'clock. The matinee doors opened at three-thirty to a fair crowd. The night house was very good.

There was another late arrival at Seguin on the 11th. The next day at Bryan the show found a very soft lot and the pole wagon became mired. Other heavy wagons were difficult to move to their correct position on the lot. However, business was good at this town. Mexia on April 13 drew good crowds to both shows as the weather improved temporarily. The next day at Fort Worth was one of the coldest of the season to that point. Rain fell all morning and the parade at noon went out in a snowstorm. The show used the Texas-Pacific lot which was nearby. The attendance was very poor at the matinee and the night house was only fair.

Beginning at Electra, Texas on April 16 the show played a series of uninterrupted dates which ended at Colorado Springs, Colorado, on the 28th. At Electra business was good at both performances in spite of strong wind. Childress and Memphis,

The America tableau on Christy Bros. Circus. Pfening Archives.





both Texas stands, brought the same type of crowds the following two days.

The show arrived in Clarendon, Texas on April 19 in freezing weather but it warmed up by noon. The parade went out on time and brought a fair matinee crowd and a good night house. The show then jumped to Amarillo where it again was very cold in the morning but warmer at noon. There was a large matinee crowd and a good night house. The show then entered New Mexico with stands at Clovis and Vaughn on the 21st and 22nd. The latter town broke the long jump to Albuquerque. Although most shows gave only a matinee performance in Vaughn, Christy decided to give a matinee and a night show which resulted in good business at both performances. The Musical Gray Comedy Co., passing through on a long jump east over the Santa Fe, stopped to see the matinee. Mrs. Harvey Johnson, who had been ill for a week, returned to the performance at Vaughn. Merritt Belew introduced a novelty in the big liberty horse act—a horse that skipped a rope.

The band members were listed in a *Billboard* report: "Everett James, director; Dallas Darrs, C. E. McKinney, J. P. Chase, Harry James, cornets; R. D. Monibon, Salvador Verastigues, Earl Honibett, B-flat clarinets; Fred Hernrich, E-flat clarinets; David DeVae, Peck Duchene, altos; Charles Summers, W. D. Robertson, trombones; Billie Cordill baritone; Charles DeWitt, Henry Livingston basses and C. W. McKay, electrical drummer."

Albuquerque on the 23rd of April brought big business at both shows. The lot was located very close to the Santa Fe depot. Santa Fe, the next stand, had two capacity houses. In the afternoon the merchants raised enough money to take care of the admission for the pupils from the Indian school, and all orphans and school children were given special rates by the show. Raton was a poor stand, the only one of the two weeks. Jim Williams had his hand badly lacerated while trying to separate two stag hounds which were fighting near the dressing room, but continued to work in spite of the injury.

At Trinidad, Colorado on April 26 the circus used the old ball park grounds. This date provided a short haul and good business at both shows. The lot at Pueblo the next day was in town and there was big attendance at the matinee and night house. Colorado Springs, the last date of this string of consecutive days, provided a big afternoon crowd and fair night attendance. The weather was perfect during the week with one exception. The Santa Fe railroad provided splendid service during the long runs between cities, bringing the circus into each city no later than six o'clock in the morning.

After a Sunday run to Limon, Colorado

the show entered Kansas to begin its fifth week. The next day, May 1, at Goodland, Kansas, the lot was adjacent to the main street but only fair crowds attended both shows. At Norton, Kansas, on May 2 a terrific storm blew up between the matinee and the night show. Several of the small tents were blown down. The menagerie top was emptied of its cages, the peaks lowered, and it weathered the storm. The big top was only damaged in a few places. Rain fell all evening and it was decided to cancel the night performance. The show crew worked until day light to get the equipment off the soft lot.

It was 177 miles to the next stand at McCook, Nebraska, which the train did not reach until three o'clock in the afternoon. A cold rain was falling and the lot was under water so it was decided to blow the town. After stopping to feed and water the animals the show moved on to Fort Morgan, Colorado, on May 4 where good weather and good business was found. The May 5 stand at Sterling, Colorado, also had good weather, but the company did only fair business at the matinee and poorly at night.

The show made a Sunday run to Sidney, Nebraska for a May 7 exhibition and was greeted by good business at both performances. This stand began another series of uninterrupted days that lasted until the 26th. Towns played during this period of good weather and fine rail moves included: Scotts Bluff, Nebraska; Douglas and Casper, Wyoming; Billings,

The Columbia bandwagon in a 1928 Christy Bros. parade. Pfening Archives.



The Palm Tree tableau in a 1928 Christy Bros. parade. Pfening Archives.

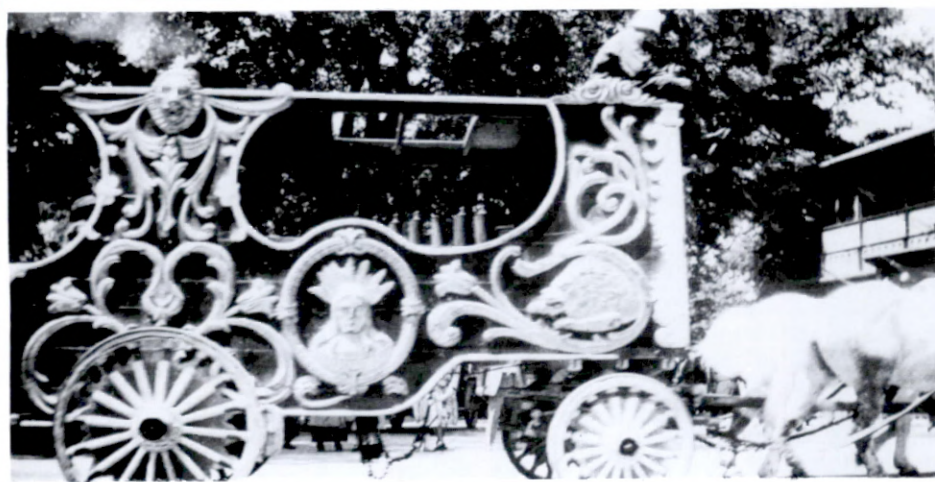
Miles City and Glendive, Montana; and Dickinson, North Dakota. The Burlington and Northern Pacific provided splendid service that allowed early arrivals with the parade leaving on time each day.

The Monge Family of ten South American acrobats, who had been in the Sells-Floto Circus at the Coliseum in Chicago, joined Christy in late May. Senor Casteleno performed a head stand on the wire thirty feet in the air without the use of a balancing pole. Pearl Clark joined and became the fifth prima donna in the spectacle. Joe "Dopie" Faley, who had worked for Martin Downs years before, joined clown alley. Joe De Rosselli, son of Rex De Rosselli, joined "Red" Sheldon's butchers. W. H. Culp became assistant to D. T. Bartlett. Joe McCullons took on the job of second openings for the side show and Walter Johnson became head porter on the train.

The ninth week of the tour began at Aberdeen, South Dakota on June 4. It was the Christy show's first appearance in the town and the circus had capacity business at both performances. The show erected its tents on the C. N. W. property in front of the depot and the main entrance was right on the side walk. Both the parade







and performance pleased the audience. George White, clown, and Smalley and Ross, acrobats and clowns, joined the show at this stand.

The date was not without excitement, however. On Sunday, the day of arrival, a polar bear attacked and killed a kangaroo while the animals were being shifted. At the matinee on Monday, while the iron-jaw number was in progress, a tornado arrived out of a clear sky and passed between the menagerie and the big top. It struck the rear end of the big tent and drove the audience out of the top, but no one was injured. After a delay of several minutes the performance was resumed.

The next day at Hankinson, North Dakota, business was big at the matinee but only fair at night because of unusually cold weather. On June 6 the show exhibited at Breckenridge, Minnesota, which was a twin city to Walipeton, North Dakota. It paraded in both towns, but the experiment was not successful and only a few people came across the river. After the matinee, the big show band and many of the show folks went to the grave of two Ringling men who had been killed when lightning struck the center pole of the big top on June 10, 1897. Town people joined in depositing flower displays as the circus band played.

Christy Bros. Circus red ticket wagon in 1928. Pfening Archives.



The Louella Forepaugh Fish steam callope in a 1928 Christy parade. It was often pulled by a tractor in the parade. Pfening Archives.

The show again met with a cold rainy day at Fergus Falls, Minnesota on June 7, although there was a good crowd at the matinee and a better house at night. The cold weather continued at Brainard the following day. The Zellmar Bros. Circus advance brigade visited at the matinee. Only one performance was given on Sunday June 10 at Mahnomen, Minnesota. After a packed matinee the workers did a quick job of loading and the show was en route to Thief River Falls before dark. That Monday the weather was more like summer and there were good crowds at both shows.

Disaster struck in Bemidji, Minnesota on June 12 when Jean Goldberry was hurled to the ground during her iron-jaw act after the stakes holding her rigging pulled loose. She struck the ring curb and a stake, breaking both legs. She was rushed to the hospital in Hibbing. She performed with her husband and a partner doing single and double trapeze, iron-jaw and slides. The city officials and the fairgrounds owners in Bemidji disapproved of the show being in town so it was forced to use a lot two miles out of town. In spite of this, there was a big attendance at the matinee and an equally large crowd at night.

The lot was on the fairgrounds at the next stand in Hibbing. During the parade there Mrs. Henry Emgard was injured when her horse bolted, and she was taken to the local hospital. Virginia, on Thursday, brought out fair crowds to both shows. The Friday stand at

Ely was made in cold, rainy weather with only fair crowds at both performances. At Two Harbors on Saturday, June 16, the American Legion convention was a competing attraction. It rained all day and poured harder at night. The night performance started early to a small crowd. The train was quickly loaded and left town before midnight for Grand Rapids, Minnesota, the Monday town, which proved to be a very good stand.

The three injured women, Jean Goldsberry, Mrs. Harry Johnson and Mrs. Henry Emgard, joined the show train at Grand Rapids on June 18. Another lady, Grace Touig, who had been in the hospital, had re-joined at Bemidji.

Everett James reported that he had the two youngest band members in the business. Harry James, his thirteen year old son, held down the second cornet chair, while the first chair was occupied by D. D. Davis, twenty two years old. The younger James, of course, went on to fame and fortune as a band leader and Hollywood personality. The team of Smiley and Ross closed at Grand Rapids, Minnesota on June 18 due to an accident suffered by Al Smiley.

Crookston on June 19 proved to be an adequate date. Then the much needed rains arrived and made life miserable for the show folk and would-be patrons. The lot at Grafton on June 20 was covered with thick, black mud and the pole wagon sank to the hubs. The side show and big top were finally erected after a long battle. But since it was impossible for people to wade through the mud to the front door, the management gave up, re-loaded and left for Langdon, the next stand.

At Langdon the lot proved to be in a little better shape and the show gave only an afternoon performance. An early start took the show to Cando on June 22 where business was much better. John Hoffman was badly injured at Cando when one of the lions clawed him. In spite of the injuries he worked the next day. A long series of Montana dates began at Sidney on June 29. Scobey followed on the next day.

One of the most extraordinary events in circus history occurred on July 2 when the show appeared in two towns on the same day. After the matinee at Plentywood, Montana the show train loaded out at 6:00 p. m. on July 1 for a run of 122 miles to Wolf Point, Montana for an afternoon show. Meanwhile, Harry Dalvine, Eddie Johnson and their crew headed for Glasgow, Montana to lay out the lot and drive all the stakes in preparation for an evening performance, which shortened the set up time considerably. In Wolf Point everything was up on Monday morning by 8:00 a. m. and the parade left the lot at 10:30 a. m. All tops were erected in Wolf Point and all but the big top and dressing



room were dismantled as soon as the performance started. The show was not cut and the concert was given. All the personnel pitched in and it took only an hour to get the circus off the lot. The train left Wolf Point at 3:25 p. m. on a fifty-one mile jump to Glasgow.

The train arrived in Glasgow at 5:30 p. m., but only the big top was erected. Doors opened at 8:15 p. m. and the performance began at 8:45 p. m. with a larger crowd than had been present at Wolf Point. Nothing was unloaded that was not actually necessary to erect the big top and give the night performance. The spectacle was presented and the program was short only the animal acts.

Several things contributed to the success of this move. The sun did not set until after 8:00 p. m. and it was daylight until about 9:30 p. m.. The railroad made the move with no layouts for freights or passenger trains. A town sponsored rodeo was scheduled for July 1 to 5 in Glasgow, and rather than antagonize the rodeo management the circus arranged with them to allow a night performance only. The show set up up on lots near the rail line in both towns.

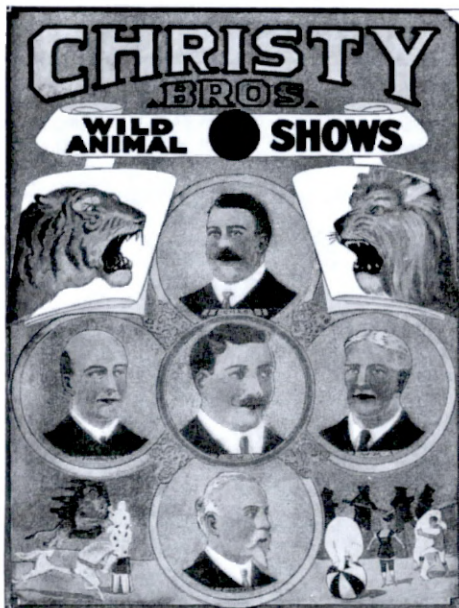
After Glasgow, Christy continued in Montana at Malta, Havre, Fort Benton, Lewistown, Roundup, and Harlowtown where a matinee only was given on July 8. These dates proved to be the most successful to that point in the season. The towns furnished capacity houses at every matinee and the usual fair houses at night.

The July 4th date in Havre produced a straw house matinee. But heavy rain kept the night house small. The next day at Fort Benton a matinee produced huge crowds. The early departure for Great Falls was in a driving rain. The stand in Lewistown on July 6 brought great business. En route to Roundup, the July 7 stand, three of the flat cars jumped a switch in the yards at Harlowtown, but the train was delayed for only a short time. The stand at Harlowtown on July 8 was a matinee only, but played to a capacity crowd. The circus left the Great Northern railroad at Lewiston and made three stands on the C. M. & St. P. through Helena and then resumed its tour on the Northern Pacific.

The July 9 stand at Helena did big business at both performances. Nita Belew, who had been on crutches for a week after a fall while riding manege, could not perform. Jean Goldsberry had improved but was still confined to the train for the most part.

George Wright and his partner had closed in clown alley and left for the western states. Mrs. Henry Emgard departed for her home in Houston to recuperate. Mr. and Mrs. "Texas" Fred Motes joined

the wild west contingent. Mr. and Mrs. A. B. "Curly" Murray returned from Texas and took their former jobs in the side show. Tom Hibbard, recovered from illness that kept him home, returned to present his walk around as "Felix, the Cat." Kid Coltman, a four-year veteran of the Christy Show, left at Helena. His partner, third cook Leonard Kisky, also left.



Back page of the 1928 Christy courier distributed in McCook, Nebraska, a stand that was cancelled. Pfening Archives.

Bozeman, Montana on July 10 was a good stand with members of the Pacific States Shows in the audience at the matinee. Big Timber, and Red Lodge concluded the tour through Montana. Powell, Greybull, Thermopolis, Riverton, Lander, Glenrock, Wheatland, Cheyenne, Laramie, Rawlings, Rock Springs, and Evanston on July 24 were the Wyoming dates which followed.

At Cheyenne on July 20 the Christy show joined the American Legion Convention in a huge parade. The circus equipment and personnel formed the third division of an immense parade. The performances brought out a good attendance at the afternoon show and a big night crowd. Ken Maynard, formerly with the Sparks Circus and Ringling-Barnum and a star with First National Pictures, was a visitor.

Thermopolis on July 15 and Rawlings on the 22nd were Sunday dates during this Wyoming tour, and brought big business. The crowds at Rawlings were so large that two shows were presented rather than the usual one performance.

Showers were a daily occurrence but only on one occasion was the big top emptied. The worst storm came at Lar-

amie on July 21, arriving while the parade was downtown and lasting until after 2:00 p. m. Heavy wind and hail all but beat the tents down. The matinee started at 3:30 p. m. to a full house and there was another big turn out at night. On July 23, a wind and rain storm struck the show at Rock Springs just as the matinee opened. The tent was emptied, but there was no damage to the big top. The menagerie, however, was blown down. The performance was resumed after a thirty minute delay.

The steam calliope was taken to the Union Pacific shop at Evanston, Wyoming where it was given a thorough inspection. It was returned the next day in Ogden, Utah, almost like a new machine with all new flues. The lot at Ogden on July 25 was three miles from the city. There was a fair matinee and a slightly larger audience at night. General agent J. D. Newman of the Floto show was a visitor. The Sells-Floto Circus was in opposition to Christy at Ogden, Pocatello and Idaho Falls. The stands at Pocatello and Montpelier on July 28 concluded this long run of uninterrupted dates and business was fair at Logan with Montpelier the poorest day for some time. Over Sunday the show moved Idaho Falls where there was fair attendance.

The show reported that: "Conditions in Idaho and opposition made the ten dates nothing to brag about." There was also very hot weather with a great deal of rain. A severe storm at Pocatello on July 27 just before the doors opened for the night show ripped the menagerie tent. The big top was saved, and repairs were made on the menagerie top at Idaho Falls on the 29th. The attendance was very good at Pocatello in the afternoon but only fair at night.

The week of July 30 opened with the Christy show at Idaho Falls, followed by Rexburg, Burley, Twin Falls, Gooding and Nampa, all Idaho. No events of note occurred during the week except for the departure of C. W. Kay, trap drummer, and Peggie Blackstone, female impersonator in the side show. They both left at Twin Falls.

Another long, uninterrupted run began at Boise, Idaho on August 6. There wasn't a Sunday break until September 22 in Scott City, Kansas. At Boise, Tommy O'Fallon, cornetist, joined the big show band. Payette, Idaho, and Baker, La Grande, Pendleton, and Hood River, all Oregon, were the stands for the week with Bend on August 12 the Sunday date.

At Baker on the August 8 members of the show visited the grave of Alexis Prosken, a stunt bicycle rider on the Sells-Floto Circus. Prosken was killed during a performance in that town about 20 years before. Members of the Abner K. Kline Carnival visited at La Grande the next



day. Mrs. Merritt Belew was injured and had to drop out of the performance. Jean Goldsberry was walking and expected to return to work within a week. Bend, the Sunday stand, provided two big crowds. At this town the circus folk joined with the local people to form bucket brigades to prevent a large grass fire from reaching the town.

Animal trainer John Hoffman had an unusual experience at La Grande. After the night performance he visited a local movie house to pass the time until the train was loaded. He fell asleep and did not wake up until 5:30 a. m. when he found himself locked in the building. He finally was freed and caught a local train to Pendleton where he arrived in time for the parade.

An unfortunate incident occurred at Pendleton on August 10 due to the show's refusal to give a large number of free tickets to the fire department. The circus used the usual lot outside of the city limits, but it was covered by about six inches of dust. The 24 hour man had arranged for the use of a hose and enough water to lay the dust in time for the performance. The hose was furnished by the city commissioners, ready at the hydrant the night before the show arrived, but after arrival the circus was unable to secure the use of a city sprinkling cart. The managers of the Pendleton Roundup furnished their sprinkler. It was used for about an hour when the fire department chief arrived and removed the hose from the hydrant, claiming that no arrangements had been made for free tickets. The matinee performance was filled despite the ankle deep dust. There was another big crowd at the night house.

The next week the circus played small towns in Washington and Oregon and made a Sunday date at Red Bluff, California on August 19. This schedule involved several long train moves and kept

Christy Bros. Circus side show banner line. Pfening Archives.

the circus workers busy getting the equipment on the lots. The lot at Vancouver, Washington on August 14 was a long way from town which resulted in a five mile parade. There was a good afternoon crowd and a packed house at night.

From Vancouver the train was delivered by the Union Pacific to the Southern Pacific yards in Portland. Then came a long run through mountains and tunnels to Tillamook, Oregon, arriving at 3:00 p. m. on August 15. The railroad used five engines on the run to Tillamook. Three engines were in front, one in the middle, and another behind the caboose. The lot there was a mile from the runs, too far to make an afternoon show. The sideshow opened and did big business. At night the crowd was sitting on straw.

The run to McMinnville, Oregon from Tillamook resulted in a late arrival and no parade. The matinee performance started at four o'clock with a good crowd. Night business was capacity. There was also a late arrival at Roseburg on August 17 and again no parade, but the two performances brought big business. Medford, Oregon on the 18th provided the biggest business of the week with a capacity matinee and a very big night attendance. Robert (Chick) Howe, in charge of the pet show, left at McMinnville with his main attraction, "Tiny Mite." William Hunt replaced him as manager.

The longest jump of the season thus far was from Medford, Oregon, to Red Bluff, California on August 19. The train left at midnight and did not reach the California city until 5:30 p. m. One performance starting at nine o'clock in the evening was presented to a capacity crowd.

On August 20 the show played Oroville, California and the next day was at Stockton. Just before the matinee at Stockton, a sudden gust of wind nearly blew down the ladies' dressing room. One of the center poles hit Mrs. Everett James and Lola O'Westney who received a deep

# UVALDE

(Season of 1928.)

Tuesday, Nov. 20

## CHRISTY BROS BIG 5 RING WILD ANIMAL SHOWS



**The Newest  
Big Show In All  
The World**

**5 Continent Menagerie**

1250 People — 500 Horses — 50 Cages Animals  
30 Lions — 2 Cars of Elephants and Camels  
5 Bands — 2 Calliopes — 2 Complete Electric  
Light Systems — 30 Double Length Steel Cars  
6-Pole Big Top — 5 Mammoth Rings —  
2 Steel Arenas — Wild-Beast Hippodrome

1000 Character Bible  
Spectacle

Noah and the Ark

The Longest, Ceatliest and  
Most Magnificent Open Den

Free Street Parade at  
12 O'Clock Noon Daily



**2 SHOWS DAILY: 2 and 8 P.M.**

Christy used this same ad for a number of years. Pfening Archives.

gash in her head and was knocked unconscious. Mrs. James' left arm and shoulder was bruised.

After the night show closed at Stockton the circus jumped 202 miles to Reno, Nevada on August 22, where it did the biggest business of the year. The train did not arrive in Reno until 2:00 p. m. due to a long, slow run through the Sierra Nevada Mountains. A large crowd waited patiently along the streets until it was announced that the parade had been cancelled. They then flocked to the lot where they found the side-show open at 5:30. The kid show was jammed until ten at night. The crowd filled the big tent to the ring curbs within half an hour after the doors opened. The doors were closed and tickets sold for a second show, which started at 9:15 with the tent again filled.

From Reno the show moved back into California at Susanville, and then to Lake View, Oregon. Alturas, California, was the Saturday stand with Westwood the Sunday date on August 26. Leaving the Golden State, the show embarked on a series of stands in the Nevada desert. The weather in the desert in August was very hot with occasional gusty winds. Fallon was the Monday stand on the 27th with Winnemucca, Elsbrough, Ely and Wells oc-



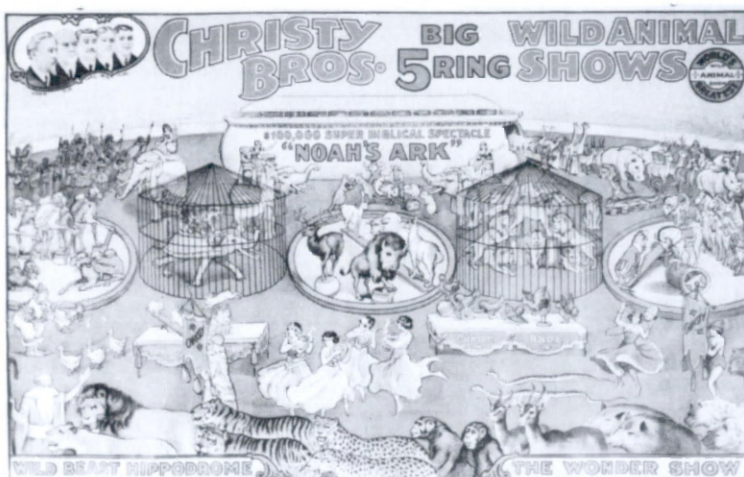


cupying the work week. Crossing the Death Valley region on a 229 mile jump, the show stopped to feed and water at Wells, where a large crowd attended at the matinee only performance. On Saturday, September 1, the show arrived in Toole, Utah, a mining town, for two good houses. Otherwise the business for the week was only fair. Parades were dropped with one exception during the week. There was a long run from Elko to Ely, which had never hosted a big show. A thunder storm kept the attendance low at the matinee, but there was a good night house.

The circus made a run of 243 miles to Las Vegas, Nevada, for the Labor Day date on September 3, arriving at nine o'clock. There was no street parade, but both shows started on time to good business.

A run of 181 miles across the desert brought the company to Barstow, California, on September 4, which was billed for a matinee only. Because the 110 degree heat was unbearable for both the people and the animals, the show was not unloaded and the stand cancelled. A stop was made to feed and water the stock while the flats with the animal cages were run under water tanks of the Santa Fe Railroad and thoroughly drenched. The train left about 2:30 p. m. for a long, hot run of 294 miles to Wickenburg, Arizona. Due to the extreme heat in the sleepers most of the performers sought relief by resting on the flat cars under the wagons. It was the hottest day of the tour at Wickenburg, but the train was unloaded and the tents erected. Then, it was decided to omit the performance and the train was reloaded and left in the evening for Phoenix arriving just after midnight. The train was unloaded as soon as it arrived to protect the stock. The city sprinkling carts were kept busy wetting down the sandy lot. Before leaving Wickenburg the cages and other stock were given another drenching from the water tanks. The show paraded at Phoenix for the first time in a week.

On September 7 the show appeared at Prescott, Arizona, followed by Clarksdale and Flagstaff. Winslow, the Sunday date on September 10, closed the tour of Arizona. It then jumped into

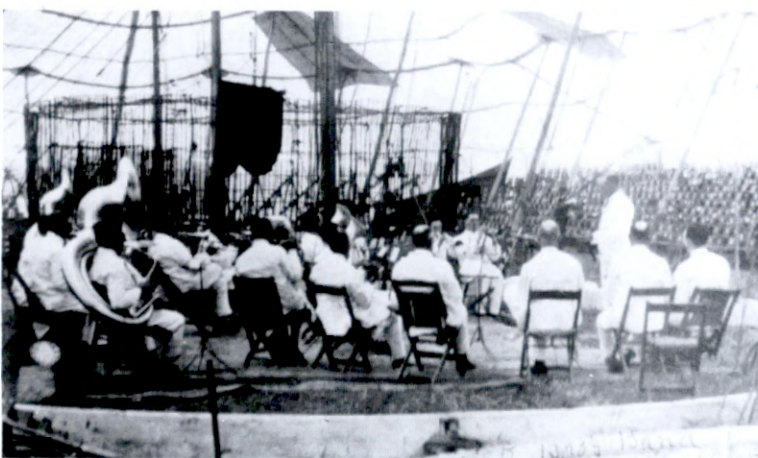


The Christy show was known for its beautiful lithographs. This Noah's Ark spec bill was printed by Erie. Pfening Archives.

New Mexico at Gallup for three dates, followed by El Paso, Texas, and and four more stands in New Mexico. Two dates in Colorado and then Kansas were made to conclude a long series of uninterrupted dates at Scott City, Kansas on September 22.

During the latter part of this period Harry Delvine took over the 24 hour work after Ernest Damon left the show on September 23. Elsie Saturis, trapeze performer, also closed. The Healeys, wire-walkers, joined at El Paso, Texas on September 14. The circus train was transferred to the Santa Fe Railroad at La Junta, Colorado on the 19th where business was very good. The members of the state champion high school band were guests of the show and paraded around the track. Lamer, the last stand in Colorado on the 20th, also brought in good

Everett James and his big show band playing a pre-show center ring concert. Pfening Archives.



business. At Garden City, Kansas on September 21 the special train of presidential contender Al Smith stopped at the runs at night and the candidate watched the loading. Scott City, a small farming town, gave only fair business.

The show then made a short Sunday run to Great Bend, Kansas on September 23 which gave the personnel a day of rest. The two Great Bend performances, on a lot near the train, had good houses. A new lighting plant arrived at this time. The wild west concert was taken over by Fred Minsey with

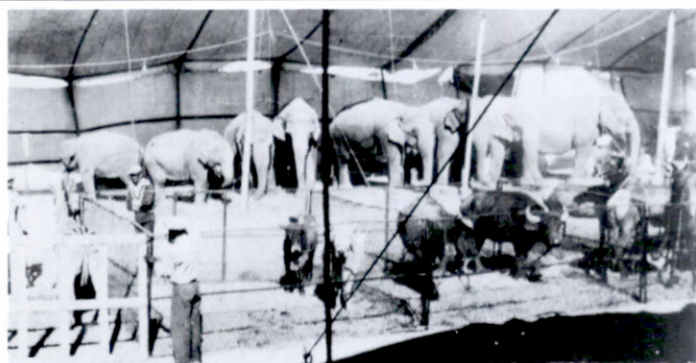
Arizona Reed, trick rider; Chief Two Eagles, roper; Madeline Meyers, sharpshooter and Con T. Larow, rope spinner.

The rest of the week was spent in Kansas and Missouri. A Sunday run to Macon, Missouri on September 30 brought the circus into that state for five stands. October 9 and 10 dates at Iola and Fredonia, Kansas opened the next week, followed by four Oklahoma stands. A second week of Oklahoma towns continued the tour from October 15 to 20.

The next week began with Seminole, Oklahoma on October 22, followed by the season's last two Sooner State engagements. The weather was excellent during the days in Oklahoma and matinee business was big with fair night houses. Frances Peasely became an added prima donna in the spec. "Slim" Walker took over the Nubian lion act after Captain Bailey closed. The mayor at Holdenville raised the fee for the street parade and lot license so high for the October 23 stand that the circus refused to pay it. The show contracted a lot outside of the city limits. The parade was given around the show grounds which resulted in a packed house at the matinee and a good night attendance. The week concluded with three dates in Arkansas. Late arrivals at two of the Arkansas towns made the parade impossible.

The show made a Sunday run to Fordyce, Arkansas for an appearance on Monday, October 28, where it rained all day. The lot was close to the main street and the parade went out in a downpour. Poor business prevailed there and at the next two towns. On November 1 the circus was at Arkadelphia in the rain. It used a new lot at the airport but gave no afternoon show, nor did it pa-





Elephants and lead stock in the Christy Bros. canopy menagerie. Pfening Archives.

rade. The night show drew a poor crowd. It took all of the horses and the elephants to get the show off the lot. The show concluded the week at Prescott and Benton, Arkansas. It stopped in North Little Rock on Sunday to dip the stock. Illness overtook John Hoffman at Arkadelphia where he was hospitalized. Stanley Weed was taken from the train to a hospital in Little Rock.

The next week started with the final three Arkansas dates, and the first of those in Louisiana. The weather was horrible. Long jumps and bad lots also created problems. Stuttgart, Arkansas on November 5 brought only fair business. Clarendon, Arkansas, after a short haul on the Cotton Belt, also produced fair houses the next day and at Helena rain fell all day on the 7th. The show used the old fairgrounds for an afternoon only performance. In spite of the long haul, plus the mud, the town nearly filled the tent.

Typical Christy lot lay out. The six pole big top is at left and the canopy style open air menagerie is at right. Pfening Archives.



There was a longrun to Bastrop, Louisiana for the engagement on November 8, and the train did not arrive until eleven o'clock. There was no parade and no afternoon performance, but good business at night. Glenmora, the next day, repeated the previous

day's experience. Although the lot was located near the runs, it was very soft, making it very difficult to spot the wagons. No parade and no afternoon show were presented. There was fair business at night. The run to Abbeville, Louisiana was another long one with the train arriving in town about nine o'clock. The



Christy Bros. advance advertising car. Although this photo was taken in 1924, the same car was used in 1928.. Pfening Archives.

Ralph Miller Carnival was on the adjoining lot. The circus did not parade but did give two performances to fair business at each. The 150 mile run to Eunice, Louisiana was made in good time and the circus paraded. The Walter L. Main Circus was at nearby Clarendon, Arkansas,

and visits were exchanged. Ruston on November 12 was the last date in Louisiana.

The show then opened a long series of dates in Texas at Nacogdoches where the lot was a long way from town. Business was good since the farmers in the region are just getting in the money from their vegetable crops. Members of the J. Doug Morgan Shows attended the matinee. Roy Houser and his wife, Helen, joined and he took over the big lion act. Lufkin was the next town and Brenham followed after a long run and a late arrival. The lot was close in town but no parade was presented. The members of the Edna May Cook Company were guests at the matinee. Cuero was the next stand and the Christy Bros. Circus participated in the annual "Turkey Trot" parade. A crowd of some ten thousand people lined the streets for this event. The circus set up on a lot near the freight depot and across the

street was the J. George Loos Carnival. At the head of the circus portion of the parade was a portable enclosure with the show's three ostriches carried by circus Zulus dressed in leopard skins and carrying spears and shields. The weather was like summer but the crowds were only fair. Then came Kerrville

on November 17 where the owners of the local motion picture house had tied up all the close-in lots. This forced the circus to play a lot two miles out of town. The show did not parade but had a good crowd at the matinee and at night. The next day, a Sunday, was spent at New Braunfels where a matinee only was given.

A long run through San Antonio to Crystal City followed with no parade and only fair business at each performance. John Hoffman returned to work the lion act. It was finally announced that the show would close at Madisonville, Texas, on November 28.

Uvalde, Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Hondo, and Gonzales closed the last full week of the tour on November 24. The final week opened at Cameron, after a Sunday run with no show, on November 26, and continued at Conroe before the closing at Madisonville on November 28. Christy returned to its quarters in South Houston after completing a tour of 22,908 miles in twenty-one states.

The show left quarters on 20 cars. By the time it played Ruston, Louisiana it was on 19 cars. It is not known which car was removed from the train, or when. It went out on 20 cars in 1929.



The concession department of King Bros. Circus in the middle 1940s spawn two other shows. One was Biller Bros., framed by Arthur Sturmak, a King veteran. The other was Dales Bros., organized by M. J. Dalesio, better known as Mickey Dales. Both men were well schooled in the art of grift.

In 1947 Dales operated games of chance in the King side show. Also on the show were mechanics David and A. D. "Deacon" MacIntosh who had learned their trade on Ray Rogers' circuses in the 1930s. During the later part of the 1947 season the three began planning a new show to open the next spring. It has been suggested that their motive in creating a show was to provide a setting for games of chance.

The Dales show core equipment came from the short lived 1947 King and Franklin Circus. King and Franklin had been organized by Ernie White, a Hendersonville, North Carolina circus fan, and managed by John Loy. King and Franklin, using a 70 foot big top with four 20 foot middles and about ten trucks, opened April 25 in Hendersonville and closed in Wytheville, Virginia late in May after a run of bad weather, poor routing and light business. The equipment was returned to Hendersonville and offered for sale in the June 2 *Billboard*. The show apparently was not sold, however, and with the help of Charlie Campbell it was slated to reopen in August.

In any case Mickey Dales and the McIntosh brothers purchased the King and Franklin equipment in November of 1947. They also bought two small elephants, Mary and June, from James M. Cole.

The new show was titled Dales Bros. Circus and a winter quarters was established in Union, South Carolina.

On January 8, 1948 Dales wrote Charlie Campbell: "I am writing in reference to the nine high blues you have. We would like to buy them if we can use them and you want to sell. Everything is coming along fine here, really starting to work. Let me hear from you real soon."

Around January first Dales began signing staff members. He recruited a number of people who had been with him on the King show in 1947. James Salter, former King 24 hour man, was appointed general agent. James DeForrest, who had handled schools and radio on King Bros., was named press

# DALES BROS. CIRCUS Seasons of 1948-1950

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

agent. Tom Arenz was hired as side show lecturer with his wife handling snakes, the same positions they had on King. Tommy Bentley was signed for the big show and Charlie Cuthbert as band leader and announcer. Charlie Campbell was placed in charge of school contacts and radio.

The January 31, 1948 *Billboard* carried the first ad for the new Dales Bros. Circus wanting a comedy bar act, clowns, a side show manager, dancers, side show acts, a boss canvasman and workingmen in all departments.

The February 21 *Billboard* carried this short article: "Union, South Carolina, February 14. Work in local quarters is in full swing, with a crew of fifteen under supervision of David McIntosh. Mickey Dales

The Dales Bros. Circus midway in Shelby, North Carolina on April 12, 1948. This was the second stand of the season. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise identified.

and Deacon McIntosh recently purchased the last piece of equipment for the new show.

"Show now boasts 16 trucks and an 80-foot top, with three 40's and a seating capacity of 1,000. Most of the personnel for all departments has been contracted."

Two Dales ads appeared in the February 28 *Billboard*. James DeForrest wanted billposters and lithographers. The second ad wanted Mickey O'Brien, Hobe Cole, Doe Boy Cox and Iron Jaw Jordon to contact general delivery or Western Union in Punta Gorda, Florida. These names had all the ear marks of operators of games of chance.

The show ran another ad in the April 3 *Billboard* wanting the Irving Troupe, the Gallagher Family, the Don Morris Troupe,

a perch act, a juggling act, side show dancing girls, black musicians, seat butchers, concession men, seat men, riggers and working men.

The May 1 *Billboard* published this account of the opening: "Union, South Carolina, April 24. The new Dales Bros. Circus bowed for the season here Saturday (10) under direction of manager Mickey Dales. Julien West is secretary-treasurer, with David McIntosh, general superintendent, and Deacon McIntosh, chief mechanic.

"Department heads include James Slater, general agent; Jimmy DeForrest, press agent; Charlie Campbell, schools and radio; Harry Boardman, legal adjuster; R. E. Miller, assistant legal adjuster; and Leo Dales and Donnie McIntosh, concessions. Big top will be handled by Pete Rech and C. A. Smith, with the side show under direction of Manager Bill Dimsdale. Larry Davis is in charge of reserved seats.

"Features include Romig and Rooney; George Hubler, bar and trampoline; Henderson Family, jugglers; Flo McIntosh Troupe; Grace McIntosh, traps and muscle grinds; Irvin Romig, producing clown; C. A. Romig, equestrienne director; and Charlie Cuthbert, band leader. Wild west concert will have Don and Hope McLennan as producers. Larry Davis has his baby elephants, Mary and June, on the show."

The show made a Sunday run of forty-seven miles to Shelby, North Carolina for the second stand. The show moved north through North Carolina and Tennessee and played Corbin, Kentucky on





April 19 where they had opposition with King Bros., contracted for April 24. Fourteen stands were played in Kentucky.

The May 15 *Billboard* "Dressing Room Gossip" report was provided by George Hubler: "Our fifteen straight days of sunshine came to a sudden halt with much rain. The final days of the third week were cold and rainy and on several occasions most of the units had to be winched off the lot. With the coal mines back in operation, business has been zooming."

"Orchids to the designers of the spec wardrobe; to Charlie Cuthbert's snappy band, and to Mr. and Mrs. Cy Murray's cookhouse. Sam Howard, Olympic diving champion and operator of the big swim show set for Milwaukee and Canadian National Exhibition, recently visited Carl Baker. Howard put on a sparkling trampoline exhibition during the night show as guest artist during the regular act."

"Dore Miller joined recently as general agent. Billy Henderson is making progress with her slack wire act, and soon will add it to the program, giving us three wire acts. Judy, one of the young elephants, made a turn in the wrong direction during spec, collided with the bar rigging, and partially demolished same. A new pachyderm proof rigging is under construction."

James M. Salters moved to special agent after Dore E. Miller [not D. R. Miller of Kelly-Miller] came on as general agent.

Another report from Hubler appeared in the May 22 *Billboard*: "Another busy week for Wingy and his winch truck as the organization battled the rains and mud of West Virginia and Kentucky almost every day. Show kept on schedule for the most part, with only a few of the matinees delayed."

"Bill Dimsdale, side show manager, has obtained a set of new banners. Kid show has shown an unusual pull for a motorized outfit. Bobby Burns, armless wonder, recently closed."

Hubler had this report in the May 29 *Billboard*: "Big show program has been revamped and several new acts have joined. Peggy Henderson McDonald is working roly boly, while Billie Henderson successfully launched her debut on the slack wire. Mr. and Mrs. Joe Ryan joined with their menage horses and dogs. Bill Spake joined clown alley and also works bar and trampoline comedy. Larry Davis ups the big top while Pete Rech downs it, Rech also is boss property man."

Dales went into Ohio at Gallipolis on May 11 for five stands and then entered West Virginia at New Martinsville on May 17. Rain in Pineville, West Virginia cut the gate at both performances. The matinee was cancelled in Mullens, West Virginia the next day due to rain.

The June 5 *Billboard* published this from Hubler: "Our sixth week was marked by good business, clear weather, grassy lots, and numerous visitors."

"Peggy Henderson MacDonald has been on the sick list. Her dad Lou, after a hasty rehearsal, took over the roly boly spot for Peggy while little Carol Altemose, 7, took over in the trampoline act."

"Don McClennan's wild west concert draws an unusually high percentage of the big show customers. Besides Don's expert roping, concert features Chief White Eagle, rifle expert and knife throwing; the Kill'em Kid's bull whip manipulation, bulldozing by Princess Dolores Altemos, and trick riding by the entire troupe."

The show went into New York for a single stand in Salamanca on June 1 then continued in Pennsylvania through June 29. The show then cut across northern Ohio and entered Michigan on July 12 at Monroe.

Hubler further reported on June 12: "Our seventh week was spent in Pennsylvania and business and weather were ideal. We have been fortunate, so far, to have every Sunday off. A recent Sunday was divided between visits to the Cole show in Akron, Ringling in Pittsburgh, and Lake Chautauqua in near-by Warren, Pennsylvania, our Decoration Day town. The Ferris Shows were pulling off the lot as Dales Bros. pulled on in Warren, and we day and dated the Majestic Greater Shows earlier in the week."

Hubler continued on June 19: "Salamanca, New York, home town of Jerry Pressley, proved one of the best stands of the season."

"The band boys escaped near injury in Towanda when the bus suddenly lost its air brakes. Skipper Cuthbert made a skillful forced landing which resulted in only minor damage."

The June 26 *Billboard* published this report from Hubler: "We again have printed route cards and Charlie Cuthbert's smiling."

"Flo McIntosh pulled a Gypsy Rose Lee during the swinging ladder display and was forced to cut her routine abruptly. Jerry Pressley is now riding menage while her hubby, Keller, has been appointed big top boss canvasman."

"Joe Ryan is breaking a



The Dales Bros. ticket semi in Shelby, North Carolina on April 12, 1948.

beautiful new black menage horse and Mac McDonald is breaking the baby bulls."

This mention of Mac McDonald breaking elephants indicates that Larry Davis had left.

By the middle of June side show manager Bill Dimsdale had left as the show advertised in the June 19 *Billboard* for a side show manager and kid show acts. I. B. McCoy later became manager of the midway annex.

Hubler provided this report to the July 3 *Billboard*: "Maynard (Spike) Jones, of the big top, is drumming with the big show band and has installed new vim and vigor in the performers with his nifty drums, traps, cowbells, tinkle noise makers and other gadgets. C. H. (Steve) Jordan is doubling on banners and playing a powerful bass horn in the band."

"Mickey Dales has returned from the advance and is catching up on his baseball playing, along with Leo Dales, iron jaw; Jasper Henderson, the Pressley troupe, who just joined, and Andy of the big top, our dusky demon of the dusty diamond."

"As we pulled into Blairsville, Pennsylvania for our weekly Sunday off, the streets took on an air of a showmen's convention. Besides Dales Bros., there were

Dales Bros. big top and pole semi in Shelby, North Carolina.





the caravans of the Dumont Shows, Beam's Attractions and Caravella Amusements. There was much confusion over whose arrows were whose. Wilno, the cannon act, was certain he was on the correct lot until he saw our big top go up in front of him—instead of Dumont's Ferris Wheel."

Dales played Connellsville, Pennsylvania on June 23 to a capacity night house.

Hubler's final "Dressing Room" column appeared in the July 10 *Billboard*: "In Brad-dock, Pennsylvania we were hit by a cloudburst that left three inches of water in the center ring."

"Not to be outdone by the recent swinging ladder embarrassment suffered by Flo McIntosh, Vivian Rech suffered a similar (costume) breakage during the same number in Uniontown, Pennsylvania and had to be scurried from the ring in a hastily recruited towel and barrel. The girls are busy designing new unbreakable unmentionables."

"This will be the last column by the writer, as he and Bill Spake leave for the Greenville, South Carolina, Lions' Circus and then start their fair tour. The typewriter will be turned over to Frankie Clark for future columns."

The show was in Chicago Heights, Illinois on July 20, playing nine dates in that state. Moving west, Dales played Fairfield, Iowa on August 2.

The July 31 *Billboard* published this report from Frank Clark: "Bobby Miller has taken over the side show for the time being. Burt Pettis and family joined, Burt being boss canvasman of the side show. Steve Crowe, formerly with Mills Bros., joined clown alley."

Cora Davis took over the "Dressing Room" column and sent this report for the August 7 *Billboard*: "La Grange, Illinois, July 31. Business has been good on the swing through Illinois, including stands here, Harvey and Chicago Heights."

"The organization ran into some rain recently especially early in the morning about the time we are starting to move. It's a helter-skelter affair, with performers emerging from privately owned trailers, wearing raincoats and blankets—anything handy that would shed the rain—and helping each other get the trailers off the mired lots."

Davis sent this report for the August 21 *Billboard*: "Everyone is catching up on their rest since leaving the vicinity of Chicago. Some of the folks on the show even braved the 90 miles to Milwaukee to visit the Big One."



Dales Bros. Circus side show banner line in 1948.

"Charley Cuthbert is doing a good job with the candy pitch and Tommy Bentley is doing a bang-up job with the openings on the side show."

"A large number of our personnel visited the Beatty show at Rock Island, Illinois. We had a special table at Staley's cookhouse and were served a fried chicken dinner."

"I. B. McCoy has taken over as side-show manager. The Altamose family closed the season in Albia, Iowa."

The show played Iowa, Kansas and Missouri in August and entered Arkansas at Rogers on August 27. Davis reported on the weather conditions in the August 28 *Billboard*: "The heat through Kansas and Missouri has been terrific. Our lot in Leavenworth, Kansas was a recently vacated cow pasture. Don and Holle McClennon left in Marville, Missouri, to play fairs. Tex and Marcie Maynard have the concert a western and hillbilly show. Tommy Bentley has added a snake dance in the side show, using two large python snakes. Vivian Rech made her debut in cloud swing."

"Sam Murray has taken over the coffee stand out front in place of Owen Dillen, who is running a novelty stand. On the sick list recently were Steve Jordan and Jerry Pressley. It took three of us to fill Jerry's place while she was out. Billie Henderson did swinging ladder; Gracie McIntosh, menage and wire, and yours truly, web."

On September 22 Dales played Andalusia, Alabama and went into Florida on September 28 at Panama City. The October 9 *Billboard* reported: "Dales Bros. moved into Florida from Alabama and was greeted by a capacity turnout. The matinee was given exclusively for patients of the Florida State Hospital, who were guests of the show."

"Altmore, Alabama, gave with a three quarter house at night and a light matinee. The organization played to near capacity in the afternoon at Brewton, Alabama but night business was light."

"Greenville proved one of the organization's best stands in Alabama, with capacity crowds at both shows."

Most of October was spent in Georgia. The show closed in Chester, South Carolina on November 16. The total mileage for the season was 9,286.

During the 1948 season Dales Bros. Circus visited 194 cities and gave 383

performances. Five performances were lost and four Sunday shows were given. The biggest business of the season came in Tallahassee, Florida on October 1.

Charlie Cuthbert published a route book for the 1948 season. The book contained the following information.

#### PROGRAM

- No. 1 Circus Holiday
- No. 2 June, performing elephant presented by Bert Pettis.
- No. 3 The Buccaneers, aerobatic and pyramid building sensations.
- No. 4 Tommy Bentley, astounding slide for life.
- No. 5 Swinging ladders; Jerry Pressley, Flo McIntosh, Vivian Rech.
- No. 6 Clown ball game.
- No. 7 Single traps; Tommy Bentley, Slim Biggerstaff, Grace McIntosh.
- No. 8 Dales Bros. Hollywood canines, Della Ryan.
- No. 9 Henderson troupe of hand and head balancers.
- No. 10 Concert announcement, introduction of Tex Maynard, Hope McClennon, Dorothy Oliverio, Don McClennon, Jimmy Booth, Chief White Eagle, Della Ryan, The Killen Kid, Marcie Cole.
- No. 11 Ground bars, The Hubleys; Comedy acrobats, Morris Troupe; Trampoline, the MacDonalds
- No. 12 Cora Davis, trapeze.
- No. 13 Menage and dressage; Flo McIntosh, Joe Ryan, Grace McIntosh, Della Ryan, Tommy Bentley, Jerry Pressley, Fay Romig, Carl Romig.
- No. 14 Clown water gag.
- No. 15 Florenz Troupe of wire walkers.
- No. 16 Second concert announcement, introduction of Tex Maynard.
- No. 17 Clowns, Ferdinand and the bull.
- No. 18 Slack wire, Billie Henderson; contortion, Slim Biggerstaff; rolling globe, Pete Sullivan.
- No. 19 The Romig-Rooneys. featuring "Irvie the riding riot."
- No. 20 Hendersons, juggling act.
- No. 21 Aerial ballet; Jerry Pressley, Vivian Rech, Evelyn Jordan. Vocalist Marcie Cole.
- No. 22 Clown number.



No. 23 Morris Troupe of teeter-board acrobats.

#### Staff

M. J. Dales, owner-manager; David McIntosh, owner, general superintendent; A. D. McIntosh, owner, master mechanic; Kenneth Ikirt, secretary-treasurer; Dore E. Miller, general agent; William Longstreet, contracting agent; James M. Salters, special agent; Keller Pressley, lot superintendent; Charlie Cuthbert, announcer, band leader and director of press and radio; Harry Boardman, legal adjuster; Robert Miller, assistant legal adjuster; Pete Rech, superintendent of properties; Mack McDonald, pit show and wild life exhibit; Bert Pettis, elephant superintendent.

#### Advance

Dore E. Miller, general agent; William Longstreet, contracting agent; James Salters, special agent; James DeForrest, contracting press and advance car manager.

#### Big show performers (Composite of season)

Ladies-Flo McIntosh, Grace McIntosh, Billie Henderson, Peggy Henderson, Jerry Pressley, Dorothy Oliverio, Emma Morris, Delores Thomas, Diane Pressley, Della Ryan, Fay Romig, Elizabeth Rooney, Cora Davis, Vivian Rech, Marcie Cole, Hope McClennon, Joyce Burch, Evelyn Jordan and Carol Altemose.

Gentlemen-Tommy Bentley, "Tex" Maynard, Fancher Pierce, George Hubler, Carl Romig, Don McClennon, Jimmy Booth, Don Morris, Pete Sullivan, Joe Ryan, Slim Biggerstaff, Lou Henderson, Bill Spake, Irvin Romig, Iza LaBird, Charlie LaBird, Steve Crowe, John Mathis and Howard Branham.

#### Big show band

Charlie Cuthbert, trumpet-leader; Joe Oliverio, trumpet; Roy Melvin, trumpet; Earl Hamel, trombone; Russell Harrison, trombone; Ernest L. Thompson, clarinet; Bud Summerlin, clarinet; B. T. Wiley, trombone; C. H. Jordan, baritone; Wm. H. (Bill) Wymore, drums; Iza LaBird, bass drum and Frank R. Clark, calliope.

#### Side show

I. B. McCoy, manager; Tommy Arnez, inside lecturer; Bert Pettis, boss canvassman; Hambone Nelson's Georgia Minstrels; Hambone Nelson, comedian; Black band: Walter Smith, trumpet-leader; A. J. Hall, clarinet; H. C. Brown, trombone; Alvin Matthews, saxophone; Elinor L. Arnold, drums. Soubrets: Annie May Jones and Len Atkins. Lucy Arenz, snakes and mind



The Dales big top pole semi in Niles, Michigan on July 18, 1948.

reading; Tommy Arenz, punch and magic; Ted Rea, half and half; Marcie Visingard, sword box; Chief White Eagle, impalement; Bobby Burns, armless wonder. Dancing Girls—Jerry Pressley, Dorothy Oliverio, Margaret Carland, Willie Mae Lively, Miheline Kaspar.

Leo Dalesio and Donald McIntosh, co-managers of concessions. Keller Pressley, boss canvassman; Louis Dalesio, assistant boss canvassman. Eddie Aikins and Raymond Altemose, electricians. Cy Murray, cook house steward. Harper Hardwich, superintendent of transportation. A. D. McIntosh, superintendent of mechanical department. George Griffin, 24 hour man. School man, Ed Hiler.

#### Statistics

Pieces of rolling stock gassed, 69. Show owned mobile units, 26. No serious wrecks during the entire season. Deaths during season, 3.

#### 1949

Following the close of the 1948 season Dales and the McIntosh brothers parted company and were on the John Pawling Circus in 1949. It is not known if Dales bought out their interest. His brothers Leo and Louis returned and another brother Nickey joined as legal adjuster.

During the winter all of the rolling stock was repainted. The title became Dales 3 Ring Circus, leaving out "Broth-

Dales Bros. stringer and jack semi in Niles, Michigan.



ers." The red ticket-office semi used in 1948 was replaced by a white house trailer.

The first published news of the season came in a winter quarters report by Dore Miller in the March 12 *Billboard*: "Union, South Carolina, March 5. Show will hit the road early in April. All new canvas has been purchased and equipment overhauled. Two new trucks have been bought for the advance and the brigade has been stepped up to a ten man

crew. A liberty act has been broken and elephant act has a new routine. New press material and radio disks have been prepared by the writer.

"Heralds again will be used and for the first time the show will tack banners. Harry Kackley is already contracting; Elmer Veter will handle the brigade; Rudy Jacobi will be in charge of press department; Larry Lawrenson will be second man; Harry Crabtree, boss billposter; and Dan Worniak boss lithographer. Show again will play many auspice dates."

Another report from Miller appeared in the March 19 *Billboard*: "Union, South Carolina March 12. Little Beaver, co-starred in Red Ryder pictures, will be the feature attraction on the Dales program this year.

"Other acts will be Dutton's riding acts; Willy's, jugglers; Bedell acrobatic troupe; Frank Doyle, aerialist; Wolcott's dogs and ponies; Dales' elephants; Bert Pettis' liberty horses; and Marie Murray, Lois Dillon, Marion Quinotte, Rozella Wallace and Jane Mosher, track specialties. An innovation will be a six-horse drill with all girl riders. New costumes have been purchased for an eight-girl aerial ballet. Six clowns will comprise clown alley, produced by Laurence Cross. Charlie Cuthbert again will direct the band of eight pieces

"Tommie Arenz will be in charge of the sideshow. Attractions will include Tommy Thompson, impalement and sword swallowing; Lucille Arenz, big snakes; Madam Geisha, mentalist; La Royal, magic and Punch; and Hambone and his seven-piece minstrel show. Mert Morris will have his wild life exhibit on the midway. Leo Dales again will manage all concessions.

"Harry Boardman will be legal adjuster; William Tumber, secretary and treasurer; Charlie Smith, superintendent; Ralph Mosher side show boss canvassman; Bessie Dales, in charge of front door, and Louie Welford, reserve ticket sales.

"Show was being repainted in



red, white, blue and gold scroll by Lee Hinkley. Five new trucks have been added, a 33-foot big show sleeper, working men's sleeper, horse truck and two bill trucks."

The announcement about Little Beaver was premature as he was not on hand when the season opened. However, Lash La Rue, a second level cowboy actor, was featured in the concert. His photograph appeared in the newspaper ads.

As the opening date of April 7 grew near a number of new people joined the show in staff positions. Earl and Dorothy Foch replaced Cy Murray as cookhouse boss. Jimmy Hurtt replaced Charlie Cuthbert as bandleader. Leo Dales replaced Donald McIntosh as concession manager. Harry Boardman moved from legal adjuster to business manager. Dutch Thomas replaced Deacon McIntosh as chief mechanic. Harry Kackley replaced William Longstreet as contracting agent. Frank Burns replaced George Griffin as 24 hour man.

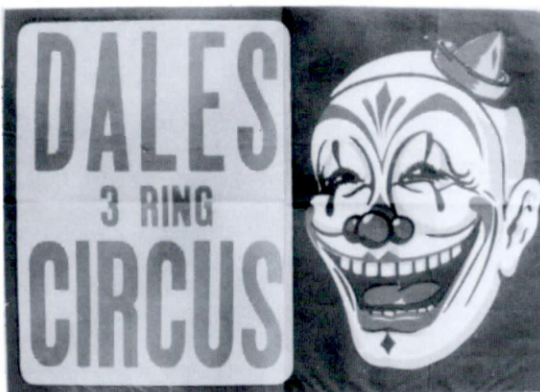
Charlie Cuthbert did not return as band leader as announced earlier, nor did Rudy Jacobi join as press agent. The performance was nearly all new. Joe (Hodgini) Hodges, wire act, and Hoffman's rolling globe act were contracted for the 1949 season.

The *Billboard* of April 16 reported the opening: "Union, South Carolina, April 9. Ideal weather and two capacity houses greeted the Dales Circus here Wednesday (7) as the show launched its season.

"Charlie Smith, general superintendent, had it up and ready despite late arrival of new side show canvas. Liberty and menage horses and elephants, under the direction of Bert Pettis, cut impressive figures at the opening.

The program follows: Grand entry, lead by Chief Fancher and Nellie Dutton; pony drills Wolcotts and Bedells; swinging ladders, Misses Willys, V. Smith and Bedell; principal bareback riding, Ida Mae Kerley; clown number, produced by Red Harris; wire act, Joe Hodges; liberty horses, Bert Pettis; clowns; dog act, Wolcotts; rolling globes, Willys; contortion; Ida Mae Kerley; comedy acrobats, Bedells; elephants; aerial web, Misses Vinning, V. Smith and Kerley; trampoline, Hodges Trio; clowns; juggling, the Willys; menage horses, with Misses Pettis, Vinning, Kerley and Moser; heel and toe trapeze, Frank Doyle; teeterboard, the Bedells; riding, the Duttons; clowns; and riding school (mechanic), Duttons.

"The concert, headed by Lash LaRue, included numbers by Red and Marie Simpson. Chief White Cloud



Dales Circus half sheet poster used in 1949.

(Fancher), assisted by Jane Moser, offered impalement and sharp-shooting routines."

The show moved rapidly north through North Carolina, to Kingsport, Tennessee for a two day stand on April 10 and 11.

By April 14 the show was in Williamson, West Virginia. Ten stands were played in that state, with a two day stand in Charleston on April 23 and 24.

The May 1 *Billboard* published this report: "Dales registering okay business when sol puts in appearance.

"Charleston, West Virginia, April 23. M. J. (Mickey) Dales, owner-manager of Dales Circus, which moved in here today for a one-day stand, reports business to date okay when the weather co-operates.

"Showing in five states in seven days at the start of the season, the organization enjoyed good business five of the seven days. Rain at Kingsport, Tennessee, and again at Appalachia, Virginia, cut business in half at both spots.

"Show staff included, in addition to Mickey Dales, Bessie Dales, secretary; Harry Boardman, business manager; Nickey Dales, legal adjuster; Ella Padgett, bookkeeper; Harry Kackley contracting agent and press and radio; Frank Burns, 24-hour man. Others include Frank R. Murphy and Lewis Watson, grandstand reserve tickets; Louis Dales, tax box; Earl

Dales cookhouse semi and dining tent in Peru, Indiana July 6, 1949.



and Dorothy Focht, cookhouse; Dutch Thomas, mechanic; Buzz Miller, assistant mechanic; Slim Biggerstaff, grandstand reserves; J. R. (Fat) Byers, blues; Eddie Aikens, electrician; Dean Hawkins, head of props; Roy Davis, Johnny Walker and Ray Thomas, grooms; and James Stark, elephants.

"Band roster included Jimmy Hurtt, leader and trumpet; Roy Melvin, cornet; Rea Williams, cornet; Elgin Scarborough, second trumpet; Earl Mamel, trombone; Jack Evans, trombone; C. F. McDonald, bass; and Bill Wymore, drums.

"Side show line-up: Tommy Arenz, Punch and magic and manager; Lucy Arenz, snakes; Tex King, fire eater; Ham-bone Nelson, Minstrels; Nellie Edwards, dancer; Chief Fancher, impalement; Betty Williams, dancer; Ralph Moser, canvas.

"Leo Dales is concession manager. Concessionaires include Bill Vinning, cotton candy; Matty Sheehan, novelties; James Kels, candy apples; Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Wilson, grab joint; Buddy Giordano, side show stand; Joe Dillon, inside stand; Joe Washy, Al Ambrose and Dan Jones, inside concessions."

The show moved in and out of West Virginia and Ohio and went into Pennsylvania at Monongahela on May 10. Sixteen stands were played in the Keystone state.

Ida Mae Kerley assumed the role of Dales reporter for the "Dressing Room Gossip" column in the *Billboard*. Her first report appeared in the June 6 issue: "Fire brigade, Shamokin, Pennsylvania hosted about twenty of our folks at a party. Leo and Louis and Norma Dales and son, Michael, visited Baltimore. Owner-manager M. J. (Mickey) Dales returned from a trip."

James Harshman visited the show in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania on June 11, 1949 and provided this review in the September-October 1949 *White Tops*:

"My first impression of the Dales circus was: here is a carbon copy of Bob Stevens' Bailey Bros. show of several years ago. The physical appearance and set-up on the lot of the two shows is quite similar. Here is a good small show that has been doing poor business this season mainly because several other shows have been ahead of them in the east. On this date, for example, they were twelve miles away from Hagerstown, Maryland, where the Big One had appeared three days earlier. Elsewhere in Pennsylvania, the Big One, Cole, and other strong competition was encountered. The rail and coal tie-ups in this section didn't help any either. Prices have been slashed



and it's an outfit that deserves good patronage, with an entertaining program that has moments of 'big-time' brilliance.

"Twenty-eight pieces of show rolling stock were counted by the writer, among them no less than seven sleeper buses. There were also several trucks utilized as sleepers. The show carries twenty-five elegant-looking horses and ponies—quite a crop for a circus this size. The animals are housed in the side show top, a fifty with two thirties, and include the two bulls, Junie and Mary, and three cages containing two Russian bears, three monkeys, a male lion and a black bear. There are about five stages in sideshow manager McCoy's line-up.

"Nickey Dales and legal adjuster Harry Broadman were very hospitable and showed us around in the absence of manager Mickey Dales who was visiting in Baltimore. W. McKinley Bausman is equestrian director and Lou Watson, announcer. Jimmy Hurtt is mail agent and has the seven piece band which features drummer Jack Sweetman, 'The Krupa of the White Tops.' Rex Rossi heads the wild west contingent which includes Jeannette Rossi, Red and Marie Simpson, and Chief White Eagle. The big top is an eighty with three forties and seats about 1,500 (grandstand 6 high with approximately 660 chairs, one end of blues 8 high seating about 660 and the other end of blues 11 high seating about 275). A 20 x 30 dressing top completes the canvas set-up.

"Standing out in the program were Frank Doyle, trapeze (this young star of the future executes heel and leg catches in a manner that reminds us of the great Albert Powell), the always colorful Dutton colonial riding act, that wonderful person, Nellie Dutton, continues to present beautiful, tasteful combinations of ballet race and circus skill blended together; the Juggling Willys; the trampoline work of the 3 Hodges; Bert Pettis' masterful handling of the bulls and liberty horses; the wire artistry of Joe (Hodgini) Hodges; and the variety of acrobatic and equestrienne chores performed by Miss Ida Mae Kerley, one of the most versatile and accomplished feminine stars in circusdom today and a protegee of Nellie Dutton.

"Clowns include Harry Ross, Charles Robinson, Jack Haines, and Steve Crowe. Joeys are okay but will the motor shows funny men ever cease presenting 'talking gags' to one eighth of the audience and produce some pantomime with good props that everyone can appreciate?

"Bert Pettis deserves the healthy



The Dales ticket trailer in Peru, Indiana in 1949.

salvoes of applause that prevail during his elephant and liberty numbers. Prior to this season Pettis confined his interest to bulls but his handling of the Dales horses is first rate also, have we another Al G. Barnes here?

"To the critical eye and ear, the lighting as a whole could stand improvement and the calliope is sadly missed in the band. With the large amount of good-looking stock this show, it would seem that the menage number might be enlarged. If the horses are not all high school animals, they nevertheless could furnish the flash required. Show could easily have ten or twelve riders circling the track while the three principals now used, work in the rings.

"Program presented in three rings.

Display 1 Grand Entry led by C. Fancher with American flag and Nellie Dutton with the Dales banner.

Display 2 Wollcott's ponies in ring 1 and Bedell's ponies in ring 3.

Display 3 Swinging ladders, the Misses Hoffman, Smith and Weller.

Display 4 Principal riding, Miss Ida M. Kerley.

Display 5 Clowns.

Display 6 Joe Hodges in an excellent routine on the wire.

Display 7 Liberty Horses (4) worked by Bert Pettis.

Display 8 Clowns.

The Dales Circus concession semi-trailer in Peru, Indiana in 1949.



Display 9 Wollcott's dogs.

Display 10 Ring 1, Rolling Globe by the Hoffmans; ring 2, Contortion extraordinary, Miss Kerley; ring 3, Comedy acrobatics, the Bedells.

Display 11 Concert announcement.

Display 12 Elephants; Bert and Marie Pettis, who get more out of two young bulls than some contemporary 'trainers' do with a ring full of seasoned charges.

Display 13 Webs, Miss Smith and Miss Kerley.

Display 14 Trampoline, the Hodges Trio.

Display 15 Clowns.

Display 16 The Juggling Willys (4).

Display 17 Menage; Marie Pettis, M. Moser, and that astonishing Kerley gal!

Display 18 Frank Doyle, trapeze. Young Doyle enters sporting scarlet cape which he discards and after ascending to the trapeze performs a lengthy series of thrilling aerialism climaxed by daring heel and leg catches.

Display 19 Bedell teeterboard troupe listed for this spot but did not appear this date due to an injured member of the group.

Display 20 Second concert announcement.

Display 21 The Colonial bareback riding act of the Duttons.

Display 22 Clown walkaround.

Display 23 Mechanical riding school by the Duttons and the town kids. A good closing number that leaves everyone chuckling."

Lash La Rue had left the show by this time and Rex Rossi had joined to handle the after show.

The June 26 *Billboard* carried this report: "Lancaster, Pennsylvania, June 18. A break in the weather for Dales Bros. Circus has failed to hypo attendance. Ideal conditions prevailed at Pottstown (6), Lebanon (7) and Lancaster (8), but business was off at each spot, even the admission has been sliced from \$1.20 to 90 cents. At Greensburg Tuesday (14) matinee was light but night house strong. Friday (10), in Chambersburg, both matinee and night shows were light. Weather was windy and threatening. Carlisle Thursday (9) gave with a three-quarter matinee and a full one at night.

"The organization, now in its 10th week, looked good here under canvas new this year. Equipment is attractive in circus red with yellow lettering. Some units carry pictorials.

"Equestrian director Dutton has a fast-moving performance. Frank Doyle, trapeze; the Willys, jugglers,



and Ida Mae Kerley were popular, with local crowds. Miss Kerley does five numbers. Bert Pettis, assisted by his wife, Marie, has the show's two bulls doing a snappy routine. Pettis recently broke in a four-horse liberty acts.

"The Morris Troupe is temporarily out of the program due to an injury to one of its members. Jack Haines joined clown alley at Pottstown.

"Art Concello visited Mickey Dales at Lebanon while Big Bertha was showing Harrisburg. Ken Maynard caught the night show at Lancaster."

Dales cut across northern Ohio in three days and went into Michigan at Monroe on June 27. The show played a two day stand in Elkhart, Indiana on July 3 and 4.

The July 9 *Billboard* reported: "Montpelier, Ohio, July 2. Threatening weather in the afternoon and a last-minute switch to another lot hit Dales Bros. Circus here Wednesday (29). Result was light houses at both matinee and night.

"At Adrian, Michigan, Tuesday (28), show canceled its matinee because of the small crowd. Night show drew a fair house. Show had competition from two carnivals. Willard, Ohio, Saturday (25), gave with a full one at the matinee and a three-quarter night house.

"Light business was registered in Elyria, Ohio, Friday (24), and at Geneva on Thursday (23). In Elyria the show bucked the opening of a new outdoor theater and came off second best. In addition, Cole Bros. Circus was at Lorain, eight miles from Elyria, and a carnival was spotted on the same lot as Dales."

Ida Mae Kerley sent this report for the same issue: "Mr. and Mrs. Wolcott rejoined in Monroe, Michigan, with their three daughters.

"Manager Mickey Dales is back on the job after a sojourn in the hospital. William Tumbler managed the front end during his absence.

"The Bedell Troupe left to reorganize before playing fair dates. Joe Barbetti joined clown alley, coming over from the Cole show. James A. Kerley, brother of the writer, joined in Monroe, Michigan, to handle the Dutton riding stock. Eugene Hoffman, of the Juggling Willys, returned to his home in Elmont, Illinois, for medical treatment."

This note appeared in the July 16 *Billboard*: "M. J. (Mickey) Dales, owner-manager, recently discharged from the hospital, joined the advance for a few days.

"George Penny is doing a good job as 24-hour man. Pauline rejoined with her wire act. Jerry Few-



The Dutton riding act on Dales in 1949.

less visited for a week and assisted his uncle, Bausy Dutton, with the horses. Steve Crowe left to fill fair dates, and Kenny Smith joined. Mr. and Mrs. C. Wilson joined the side show, Wilson doing magic, rag pictures and punch, and Mrs. Wilson handling snakes and birds.

"Frenchy Paanakker has the lunch stand, replacing Blackie and Mrs. Wilson, who left to play fairs. Slim Biggerstaff is back in the program doing comedy con-tortion. He has been in charge of seats.

"Chief Fancher is doing impalement in the big show. Nita Kitchen joined and is doing ladder and web."

A short article in the July 28 *Billboard* told of business on the Dales show: "Sullivan, Indiana, July 16. Dales Circus drew half and three-quarter houses here Wednesday (13). Tuesday (12) stand in Linton, Indiana, was held to half and three-quarters by 95-degree temperatures. Threat of rain in the afternoon and a downpour at night, together with hot humid weather, held the fire department sponsored date in Hartford, Indiana, to two half houses Thursday (7).

"Peru, Indiana on Wednesday (6) gave with half and three-quarters. The organization blew Anderson, Indiana on Saturday (9) because of the free fair and played Greenfield."

The Dales Circus property and wardrobe semi-trailer in 1949.



At this point in the season it appears that both Dore Miller and Harry Kackley had left their contracting positions. Mickey Dales was forced to go ahead of the show to fill in blank dates on the route.

The August 8 *Billboard* "Dressing Room Gossip" reported: "Owner M. J. (Mickey) Dales is back on the show after a month on advance, leaving Jack Fairchild ahead as general agent. Louis Dales and Jack Lewig, of the advance crew, spent a Sunday with the show in Russellville, Kentucky.

"The heat has brought trouble with tires, keeping Dutch Thomas and Buzz Miller busy repairing blowouts. Earl (Happy) Chatman joined the concession department with a flashy stand on the midway. Virginia Smith was presented with flowers in the ring on her birthday. Lillian Wilson has been added to the big show, doing neck loop accessions

"New in clown alley are Johnny Yerbe, Steve Crowe and Gilbert Wilson. Wilson was on the sick list following a heart attack. Mrs. Wolcott, Nita Kitchen, Rose Dales and Virginia Smith were down with the heat."

The show played six stands in Illinois and then went into Kentucky at Paducah on July 25.

Dales was in Russellville, Kentucky on August 1 and in Lebanon, Tennessee on August 4. The show headed south early in the season and went through North Carolina and into Georgia at Toccoa on August 22.

Joe Bradbury visited the show in Buford, Georgia on August 24 and made this list of the rolling stock.

Semi #18 Props and wardrobe.

Semi #19 Side show.

Semi #21 Sleeper.

Semi #- Sleeper.

Semi #22 Cookhouse.

Semi #24 Light plant.

Semi #26 Big top poles.

Semi #28 Concessions.

Semi #29 Planks and grandstand.

Semi #32 Elephants.

Semi #41 Horses.

Semi #50 Big top canvas.

St. Truck #- Jacks and stringers.

St. Truck #- Chairs.

St. Truck #- Mechanic's shop, pulled two wheel cage.

St. Truck #- Sleeper.

Bus Sleeper #-

Bus Sleeper #-

Bus Sleeper #-

Bus Sleeper #-

Panel truck, pulled ticket trailer.



Panel truck, downtown bally.

Panel truck #- Advance

Panel Truck #- Advance.

The trucks were painted red with white lettering and blue and yellow trim.

A few stands were made in Alabama before entering Mississippi at Cornith on September 1. Thirty-one stands were played in Mississippi. The show went back through Alabama and into Florida on October 14 at South Flomation. Donaldsonville, Georgia was played on October 21 and Eufaula, Alabama on the 24th. Cutting back through Georgia the show was in Fort Valley on October 29.

The season closed in Lake City, Florida on November 7 and went into winter quarters there.

#### 1950

The activities in the Lake City, Florida winter quarters were not reported in the trade publication. As was the case in 1949 there were a number of staff changes.



Dales mechanic's truck and two-wheel cage in 1949.

New bosses included J. E. Hill, manager of advance advertising car; and Chester Gregory, side show manager. Bobby Miller replaced Leo Dales as concession manager and James A. Winters replaced Bessie Dales as secretary-treasurer. Nicholas Dales moved from legal adjuster to assistant manager and front door superintendent. John Dales became 24 hour man. Harry Kackley returned as general agent. Tige Hale was hired to lead the band.

Dales ad in the February 4 *Billboard* announced the show would open in Tampa for a three day stand on March 17 "for a long pleasant season indoors and under canvas." The show wanted phone men to sell banners and underprivileged children's tickets to start working February 14. Aerial and ground acts, wild and domestic animals acts, comedy trampoline, a risley troupe and girls for ladders, menage and web were wanted for the big show.

The show opened in 1950 with new elephants. June and Mary, the young el-

ephants purchased from James M. Cole, were sold to Si Rubens for his Rogers Bros. Circus. The sale was occurred either late in the 1949 season or after it closed the tour. When the Dales circus opened the 1950 season Ringling-Barnum's Palm and Sparks Babe were there. It is not known if they were purchased or leased.

The season opened in Lake City on March 20, not in Tampa, and made a Sunday run to Tifton, Georgia for the second day.

The April 8 *Billboard* reported: "Warner Robbins, Georgia, April 1. High winds caused Dales Circus to miss both performances here March 27, but show remained for a second day, canceling scheduled performances at Forsyth Georgia.

"At Perry March 25 show had a winning day. Season started March 20 in Lake City, Florida, and while there have been some big days business has been average in South Georgia farming towns.

"Big top and side show were in the air when winds started at Warner Robbins Air Force base, about fifteen miles from Macon. When velocity topped 50 miles per hour the performances were cancelled. Little damage was done to circus property.

"Rather than disappoint \$1,500 advance sale ticket holders management decided to remain a second day, blowing Forsyth and jumping direct to Newman to pick up the route. Date at Warner Robbins was sponsored by the American Legion post.

"Mickey Dales is owner-manager; Nicholas Dales, assistant manager and in charge of doors; and John Dales, 24-hour agent.

"Performance is pleasing, running 1 hour and 29 minutes. Big top is an 80 with three 40's. Charlie Smith, superintendent, is doubling as equestrian director and announcer. Tige Hale has a peppy seven-man band. Show, jumping north rapidly, is headed into Eastern Canada.

"Others on the roster are Harry Kackley, general agent; Dore E. Miller, contracting agent; J. E. Hill, brigade agent with five billers; James A. Winters, secretary-treasurer; Chester Gregory, side show manager; David Fineman, adjuster; Charley McCarthy, assistant; Bobby Miller, concessions; George Thompson, assistant; and Dutch Thomas, head mechanic.

"Wild west concert with Chief White Eagle, sharp shooting and knife throwing; Mr. and Mrs. Tex Ryan and Mr. and Mrs. Bobby Wilder trick and fancy riding and roping.

"Side show: Chester Gregory, manager; Teddy Lewis, Jr., inside lecturer, punch and magic; Dorothy Lewis, snakes; Philip Fulton, accordionist; Billy Dick, dancer; Fanchon Pierce, knife thrower; Gregory and Ted Milligan, ticket boxes; Homer Forrest, door; Curly Denton, boss canvasman.

"Side show band, R. V. Lewis, leader; F. B. Wood, trombone; Hooks Harrison, sax; Shuffling Osborne, snare drum; and Denver Cole, bass. Irene Lewis singer in minstrel show."

Joe Bradbury visited the show in Carrollton, Georgia on April 30. He reported that the 1949 big top was being used. The seating consisted of 11 high blues and a 6 high grandstand. The number semis was the same as in 1949; however, there were three less sleepers. The temperature in Carrollton was below freezing and there was concern about the health of the old elephants.

The program in Carrollton consisted of:

1. McLean Duo on trampoline in center ring.
2. Single dogs in rings 1 and 3, presented by McLeans.
3. Ponies in rings 1 and 2, bucking mule in ring 3.
4. Swinging ladders, Sylvia Gregory, Virginia Smith and Marge Canter.
5. Slim Biggerstaff, contortion, ring 1; Barth and Maier, juggling, ring 2; Contortion, McLean troupe, ring 3.
6. Trained dogs, Gilbert and Lillian Wilson, in center ring.
7. First concert announcement introducing Tex Ryan.
8. Menage horses in rings 1 and 3, Bert Pettis and Tex Ryan.
9. Clowns, Gilbert Wilson and Eddie Harris.
10. Harry LeRoy and trained baboon in center ring.
11. Aerial web by Sylvia Gregory, Virginia Smith and Marge Canter.
12. McLean's three liberty horses in center ring.
13. Clowns.
14. Iron jaw and head swing by Sylvia Gregory and Lillian Wilson.
15. Billy Barton cloud swing over center ring.
16. Second concert announcement.
17. Clown walk around.
18. Perch act by Barth and Maier.
19. Elephants presented by Bert and Marie Pettis.

Music was provided by Tige Hale and a seven piece band.

Bradbury saw a shell game being operated on the midway, indicating that graft continued on the show as was the case in the prior two seasons. Billy Barton provided information to the "Dressing Room Gossip" column in the *Billboard*. His first report appeared in the April 8 is-



sue: "The show opened at Lake City, Florida, March 20 with only a brief rehearsal. Charles Smith is equestrian director, and the man with the baton is Tige Hale. Second day out show encountered a red-clay quagmire at Tifton, Georgia, and the matinee was lost. The rest of the week passed with dry lots, plenty of sunshine and plenty of visitors. In Warner Robbins, Georgia, personnel from the King and Dales shows exchanged visits.

Newspaper ad used for the opening day of the 1950 season.

"The Barths, perch and hand-balancing, have returned to the sawdust trail for the first time in ten years. Charlie Smith and his boys deserve honors for getting the big top up and down on these bad lots. The pie car, under supervision of Bob and Nora Cusson, is a live spot. Gil and Lillian Wilson have a snappy dog act. It's a shame that Bert Pettis' liberty horses died in quarters after all the work he had put in their training. Bobby Boulter has the wild west concert."

By April 12 the show was in Statesville, North Carolina. Barton sent this report for the April 22 *Billboard*: "Despite cold weather and mired lots the show's tour through the North Carolina mountains has been to good business. Louis Dales is getting the show up and down in good time."

Dales was in Virginia by April 20 at South Boston. The April 29 *Billboard* published this report from Barton: "Warm weather has arrived and we're trouping without the shivers. Missing from the backyard now are those bonfires. In Roxboro, North Carolina, we day and dated the Mighty Page Shows and personnel exchanged visits. The big top is in the air by 9:30 and the lot is dark by 11 p.m. Thanks to thoroughly efficient mechanics, the fleet is kept in good shape.

"Charlie Pettus and his wife, Bobby, joined the show. He is with the mechanical department and she is in the web number. First bad accident of the season occurred when Peggy Short fell out of her

house car and broke her collarbone."

Barton had this to say in the May 6 *Billboard*: "Franklin, Virginia, greeted us with two packed houses. Bobby Ray Boulter's sister joined in Suffolk with her liberty act. Marge Canter is holding down center ring in the web number. Barbara McLean is a new web girl."

Dales moved into Pennsylvania on April 29 at Hanover for a long string of stands. On June 8 Dales was in Perth, Ontario.

Canada held promise for a number of American circuses in 1950. Poor business conditions in the United States caused them to go to the Dominion for better crowds. Ben Davenport, concerned about a weak economy in the United States, looked to Canada for business. He hired Joe Louis at \$1,000 a week and opened a long Canadian tour on May 23 in Sarnia, Ontario. Early stands in Canada

caused Davenport to suggest he might close the season after Canadian stands. Louis left on July 1 after refusing to accept a cut in salary. Dailey remained in Canada until early August. Capell Bros. Circus played western Canada for five weeks in June and July and found poor business.

Even wise old Floyd King looked to the Canada for business in 1950. The King show made a 308 mile Sunday run on May 28 from Thief River Falls, Minnesota to Treherne, Manitoba. The King show found crowds in western Canada and stayed there through July 29. The Ringling-Barnum show went into Canada and found turnaway business in Montreal on May 29. It was the big show's first trip across the boarder in eleven years. Biller Bros. went into Canada on July 7 for an extensive tour.

Barton sent this report for the June 3 *Billboard*: "This organization was the first American circus to cross the Canadian boarder this year. New acts are the De Marco Troupe, teeterboard performers, and Jackie Larkin, furniture mover.

"Elmer Jones, of two-car show fame, visited with Billy Dick and Harry La Roy in Warren. Our Sunday off in Indiana, Pennsylvania, the week before saw the personnel visiting the Biller show. Andy and Mabel Kelley and Betty Biller reciprocated."

The June 17 *Billboard* published this report from Barton: "Lady Luck took a holiday on our second week in Ontario and dealt the show three quick ones to the chin. In Shelburne, high winds came up during the performance and the top collapsed. Tige Hale and his band were thrown helter-skelter into the center ring as the first center pole fell, pulling with it one section of the back reserves and the bandstand. The web girls narrowly escaped being trapped and your scribe was one scared boy as he was hanging by his feet when it happened.

"Outside the big top all hands jumped to the ropes in an endeavor to hold it down but to no avail, and finally we watched it go. The audience escaped via the side wall and for once we were thankful for a light house. Frank Stewart, clown, had his leg broken in two places rescuing a girl from the seats. After it was all over there were some things left to laugh about. That small shape moving about under the fallen canvas was only Cotton, trumpet player, retrieving his music, and the woman who went up to boss, Mike Dales, asking about a refund, got this reply, 'Lady, the man who owns this show just had a heart attack and died.' All who could sew got on the canvas and within an hour's time it was as good as new.

"Twenty-four hour man, Johnnie Dales en route on his job of marking poles skidded and smashed up his new Ford. He was uninjured and he is now sporting a fenderless 1950 model to the amazement of many a Canadian. Sylvia Gregory and Billy Barton introduced their new aerial novelty, a suspension act featuring a series of spins and cradle routines. Mac

Dales stringer and seat semi in Toccoa, Georgia on May 3, 1950. This semi was new that season. Joe Bradbury photo.



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McCoy is our new equestrian director and announcer. His wife, Janie, is in the cookhouse.

"Maxine Boulter has introduced a comedy mule to the concert. Jackie Larkin and Teddy Milligan take turns bruising each other up, one with the furniture act, the other with his guillotine. Dorothy Race presents a nicely executed three horse liberty posing act."

Dales stayed in Canada until June 19 when the show was in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. It played Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan on June 20.

Barton sent this report to the July 8 *Billboard*: "The final week in Ontario, culminating at Sault Ste. Marie, was a red letter trek with packed houses all along the route. Chester Gregory chalked up big side show turnouts and reports from Bobby Ray Boulter, who has the wild west concert, were satisfactory. The writer moved into his new trailer June 20 and his cousin, Jack Larkin, is sharing it.

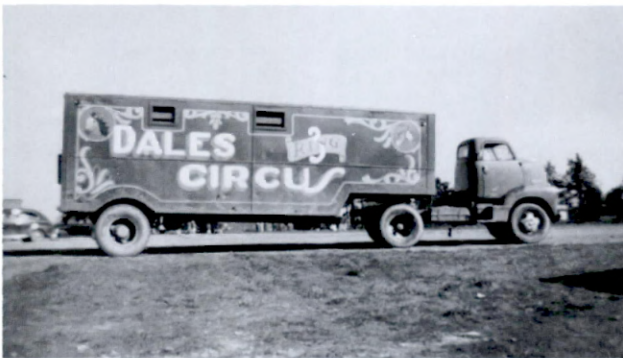
"Organization day and dated W. G. Wade Shows at Galdstone Michigan. Tommy Comstock and Ray Marsh Brydon were among those noted on the lot. Marie Hall is working the sword box in the side show and she and Dottie Milligan are in spec. Maxine Boulter made her debut in the aerial ballet under the tutelage of Sylvia Gregory.

"In the French sector of Ontario, equestrian director Mac McCoy announced La Gregory and the writer as the Sensational les St. Germaines. Mickey Dales went ahead of the show in Ishpeming, Michigan."

After ten stands in Michigan the show was in Ashland, Wisconsin on July 1 and played International Falls, Minnesota on July 4.

By this time the equipment was in poor condition. Ayres Davies saw the Dales show while it was moving across the northern peninsula of Michigan. He said:

Dales semi No. 41 carried horses in 1950. Joe Bradbury photo.



Dales Circus bill stand in Toccoa, Georgia in 1950. The show used stock paper from Enquirer Printing. Joe Bradbury photo.

"The trucks looked very run down. Some of them were running with only one tire per dual wheel."

Mail agent Tige Hale jotted this note on the No. 14 route card, sent to Paul Van Pool: "Business some better. Show very weak, go into Canada again on July 5."

Dales went back into Canada at Fort Francis, Ontario and moved quickly west to Manitoba. Winnipeg was played on July 12. Twelve more Manitoba dates were played before returning to the United States.

Barton's final "Dressing Room Gossip" story appeared in the July 15 *Billboard*: "High winds and much rain besieged the show through Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota. The matinee at Escanaba, Michigan, was lost and several times the peaks had to be lowered.

"Chester Gregory, who subbed as equestrian director recently, sure sounds a loud whistle, even if he does get mixed up occasionally. The writer held up customs at the border for several minutes as he blithely mopped water that had spilled from a tank in the trailer. Personnel, though tired from an all-night move and a very muddy lot, seemed glad to be back in the Dominion."

The second Canadian tour did not bring the show money and by July 24 Dales was back in the United States at Bettineau, North Dakota. The end was within sight.

The *Billboard* of August 5 reported: "Cando, North Dakota. Dales Circus closed here on the 26th, a few days after it returned to the United States from a run of light business in Canada. Mickey Dales, manager, was reported en route to Baltimore. The mayor of Cando said that the circus had been stalled there, and the show did

not make its scheduled stand at Lakota, North Dakota on July 25." Langedon contracted for July 28 was also blown.

Billy Barton recently provided these memories of the closing of the Dales show: "I do remember encountering extremely cold weather in western Canada. I remember the canvas truck being wrecked, going into a lake with all of the big top men riding on it. Nobody was hurt and the truck was extricated

from the water. When we arrived in Oak Lake, Manitoba on July 20, there were no seats, no light plant. We worked to car headlights beamed into the big top that night.

"This is the real reason the show closed. Mickey Dales' youngest brother and my cousin, Jackie Larkin, rented a plane and went for a spin. I think Dales' brother was the pilot, but I can't really remember. At any rate, the plane crashed, young Dales was killed and Larkin was hospitalized, seriously injured.

"The death of Dales' brother is what actually closed the show. We were all prepared to barnstorm our way south and we had no intention of blowing the contracted North Dakota dates. Mickey was shattered by his brother's death.

"The show had grift on it but it did not last long, too much heat. I think the grift only lasted a couple of weeks, if that. I remember Billy Dick being the 'belle of the ball' in the pie car and telling me the grifters were great spenders. That may be, but they caused the show a lot of problems when they were on the show. At least one hey rube occurred with an elephant being sent down the midway with a side pole in its trunk, and I think we were shot at getting out of one town. I can't remember whether there was grift on the show in Canada.

"This was my first experience with grift and my last, it was not a pleasant experience at all. Dales was desperate for money to keep the show rolling and was will to try anything. Nothing worked. It was a very bad season in toto."

No information appeared in the *Billboard* following the closing of the Dales show. It is not known what happened to the equipment. The two former Ringling-Barnum elephants were sold to Little Bob Stevens and they were on his Stevens Bros. Circus in 1951. The further activities of Mickey Dales are also unknown, but it is thought that he transferred his show business interest to the carnival field.

Some information for this article was provided by Joe Bradbury, Ted Bowman, Billy Barton, Ayres Davies and the Circus World Museum.



# 

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This Dan Castello 1869 newspaper ad listed two elephants. Pfening Archives.



May. Three elephants on the show, Mary and a male Chief (Asians), and an African female, Princess, were sold to the John Robinson Circus. In 1878 the Robinson show had these three plus four Asians, Emperor, Caliph, Radjak and Woodah, and an African, Bismarck. In May 1878 near Louisa C. H., Virginia, the big tusker Chief attacked the African, Bismarck. It turned into a real battle that soon involved the entire herd, before they could be brought under control. By 1881 the John Robinson Circus was down to two elephants, Chief and Mary. We have not been able to find out what happened to the two Africans. An ad in the November 27, 1880 New York *Clipper* offered for sale two half-grown African elephants, broke to harness and perform. These could possibly have been that duo.

Five elephants (four Asians and a young African), are depicted on the front cover of an 1872 Howes Great London Circus courier, although no other evidence of any African on the Howes show at that time has come forth. We do know that the ship *Nehemiah Gibson* arrived in this country on July 27, 1871 with eight elephants for the Howes Great London show. Five of these elephants, Mandree, Chieftian, Emperor, Victoria and Sultan became the famous performing group worked by George Arstingstall.

The Sells Bros. Circus acquired a pair of African calves in 1878. Early ads called them Tim and Flash, but these appear to have been Mike and Topsy who spent many seasons on this circus. Mike grew into a fine adult animal with an impressive set of tusks. He was from all accounts a gentle beast and never caused any trouble.

James A. Bailey and James E. Cooper bought Adam Forepaugh's circus after his death in 1890. In 1896 Bailey and W. W. Cole became partners with Peter and Lewis Sells and the title was enlarged to Forepaugh-Sells. Mike and Topsy remained with this circus. During a train wreck in 1907 Mike suffered severe burns. It is thought that this contributed to his death on December 19, 1907 at the Barnum & Bailey Bridgeport winter quarters. Topsy was alive in 1907, and the date of her demise has eluded us.

By 1879 more African elephants began to arrive in this country. In the spring of that year four baby African el-



Giant African tusker on the Forepaugh show about 1885. Pfening Archives.

phants were reported to have landed in New York from Liverpool, England. Their circus connection is unknown. However in 1879 the Cooper and Bailey Circus had two young Africans in their herd named Congo and Topsy. These could have been from the Liverpool shipment.

By the 1881 season Cooper & Bailey combined with Barnum to form the Barnum & London Circus. The show opened that spring with a herd of twenty elephants. All were Asians, but this would change the next year.

On June 26, 1865 a male African elephant arrived at the London zoo in an exchange with the Paris zoo for a rhinoceros. He was given the name Jumbo, a Zulu word meaning large packet. The elephant was then four years old, five feet tall, and in poor condition. Through the efforts of the zoo director A. D. Bartlett and his newly appointed keeper Matthew

Mike on the Forepaugh-Sells Circus about 1900. Ringling Art Museum Circus Galleries collection.



Scott the bull was restored to good health. He grew to immense statue, and was put to work riding people in the zoo. On September 9, 1865 the London zoo purchased a female elephant named Alice. The two elephants were kept separate, but Alice would later play a part in Jumbo's life.

For more than fifteen years Jumbo was no problem, but then he began to lapse into surly moods. This may have been prompted by ailments with which he had become afflicted.

P. T. Barnum, on the advice of his agent Joel Warner, made an offer to buy Jumbo. Warner had been sent by James Bailey to negotiate for the giant African. On January 25, 1882 a public notice was made of the sale of Jumbo for \$10,000. On February 17, 1882 James Davis and William "Elephant Bill" Newman arrived at the London zoo with a huge crate. After attempts to load Jumbo into the crate failed it was decided to take the crate to the docks, walk Jumbo there and load him. This plan also failed. The crate was hauled back to the zoo where it was placed in a hole dug in Jumbo's yard. The elephant was allowed to walk into the crate freely. This was continued for several days until the day of departure. On that day Jumbo entered the crate, where Scott stopped him and chained him easily. The ends were boarded and Jumbo was ready for his journey to America.

The ship *Assyrian Monarch* sailed from London on March 26, 1882 with Jumbo aboard. It docked in New York Harbor on the morning of April 10, 1882. At the dock a large crane lifted the heavy crate off the ship on to a large wagon pulled by eight draft horses. Two elephants, Gypsy and Chief followed the wagon through the streets of New York to Madison Square Garden. The elephants had to push the wagon when it bogged down. The cost to Barnum and his associates by this time had reached \$30,000.

Jumbo was an immediate sensation when he went on exhibition. Within two weeks the receipts were more than the amount invested. In six weeks Jumbo brought a total of \$336,000 to the circus. Jumbo became the feature of the Barnum and London show. Then came the fateful day of September 15, 1885 in St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada.





Jumbo, the morning after being killed in St. Thomas, Ontario. Matthew Scott is beside Jumbo's head, and the man standing to his right is probably James L. Hutchinson. Pfening Archives.

Many accounts have been written about what happened that night. The following is an eye witness account by Thomas A. Fullerton, a veteran trouper, who was there and saw it happen: "It was after the oblong tent was down and the cages were on their way to the cars. The big show was just starting. Bill Newman and George Bates had the performing bulls in the ring. George Arstingstall, elephant superintendent, was on his way with the rest of the bulls. He stopped at the crossing and asked if any trains were due. He was told there were none.

"The main line was parallel to the circus lot. The flat cars were on the side track and the elephant cars at the end. All the bulls had been loaded except Jumbo, Bridgeport and Babe when around a curve came an extra freight train on the main line. Babe ran down the bank, Bridgeport was struck and knocked out of the way with a broken leg. Jumbo stood and faced the oncoming train then turned and ran down the track. The engine hit him and hurled him to one side. I was on the scene immediately after he was hit. You should have seen the big animal, the legs on the high side, were under a flat car. The other two were on top of the flat car. Oh, what a sight. The big elephant was lying on his side dead. Scott, his keeper, was sitting on his rump crying like a baby. Jumbo was his pal. He came to this country with him from the London zoo. Jumbo was certainly a wonderful bull. On week stands Scott would sleep along side him in the hay. Being an Englishman Scott liked his beer, and Jumbo always got his share. He also like tobacco and I gave him many a 10 cent plug.

"After his hide was stuffed and his

skeleton fastened together with wire it was exhibited as a feature attraction in the menagerie."

Barnum had tried to buy Alice from the London zoo before Jumbo's death without success. After Jumbo's demise, he cabled his offer again. This time, it was accepted. When Alice arrived on the show she was paraded in the performance. She was also exhibited in the museum tent with Jumbo's hide and skeleton along with Bridgeport and Matthew Scott.

Fires had always plagued Barnum, and on November 20, 1887 one struck the Bridgeport winter quarters. Alice, along with Toung Taloung, the white elephant, and the Asian male, Samson perished in the holocaust. Jumbo's hide was saved. Matthew Scott was dropped from the show. During the 1888 season only the hide and skeleton were on exhibit.

Ringling Bros. Circus first elephants, Fannie (African), Jewel (or Julie) and Babylon, cr. 1891. Circus World Museum collection.

When Barnum and Bailey played the London Olympia in 1889 and 1890 the hide and skeleton were there. Upon return to this country, the hide was placed in a collection of Barnum memorabilia at Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts. A fire there in 1975 destroyed all this. The skeleton was donated to the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. It is still there, but not on exhibition, although the museum plans a Jumbo display in the near future.

The Great Wallace show bought a female African elephant, Jeanette, from the Miller and Freeman Circus of Columbus, Ohio in 1888. She toured with the Wallace show through 1890 and then was leased to Frank J. Taylor in 1891. From 1892 through 1894 she was on Cook and Whitby (a title used by Ben Wallace. Jeanette was with Great Wallace from 1895 until she died in 1897.

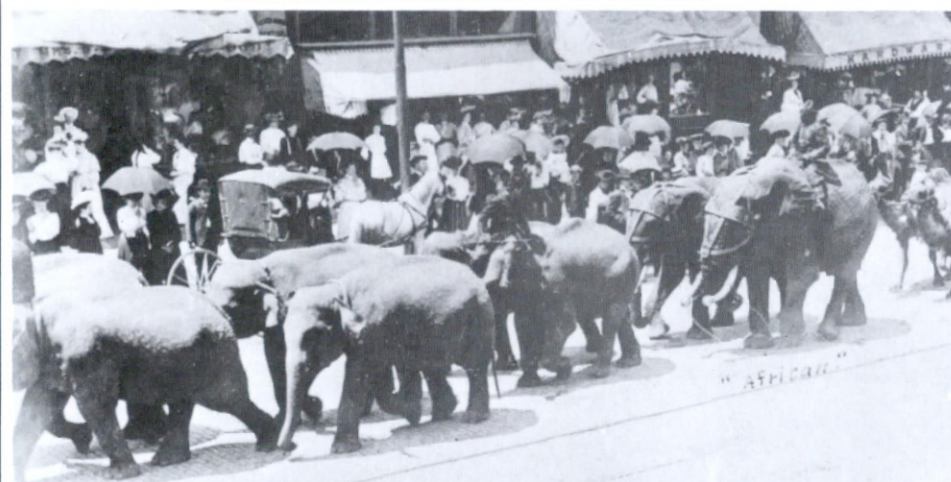
The Ringling brothers bought their first elephants in 1888 at an auction of the Dan Castello show in Alexandria, Missouri for \$4000. These were Babylon (later Babe), an Asian female, and Fannie, an African female. Fannie was a good elephant and trouped for many seasons with the Ringlings. She died at the Baraboo winter quarters in November 1900.

The Adam Forepaugh Circus also had some African elephants. Mungo, a male, was on the show for a few seasons before he succumbed to pneumonia at the opening of the show in 1882. He was mounted for display at the National Museum in Washington, D. C.

Zip, a female African elephant, was on the Andress' New Colossal Show, Circus, Museum and Menagerie in 1889. This show folded the next year, and was auctioned off on August 4, 1890. Zip was taken to Charles Andress' home town of







The two African elephants were the last in the herd in a Forepaugh-Sells parade around 1901. Pfening Archives.

Great Bend, Kansas, where she remained until sold to the Forepaugh circus. In 1892, she was sold to the Ringling Bros. Circus. Zip died after returning to the Baraboo winter quarters in December.

This article attempted to cover all African elephants appearing on American circuses before 1945. I am sure we have missed some and many details are lacking on the ones covered.

After 1904 African elephants disappeared from the American circus. Before World War I, Hagenbeck-Wallace circus carried a couple of Africans, Congo and Jumbo. These Africans together with six Asian elephants drowned in the terrible flood that swept through the winter

quarters at Peru, Indiana in March 1913. In 1922 Bert Bowers of the American Circus Corporation bought Masheeta, a large African female. She died within a year of purchase. In 1935 the new Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus acquired the male African tusker Safari from the Detroit, Michigan zoo. They changed his name to Jumbo II, and the modern era began.

In the spring of 1936 Howard Y. Bary brought five forest or so-called

pygmy African elephants to the Ringling-Barnum show. Two died on the boat. The three remaining were named Congo (male), Pourquoi or Puqua and Sudan. The pygmies were featured on a special lithograph that year. They appeared in the spec, but only one was presented in the performance. Congo died in the winter quarters in February 1937. Puqua was one of the eleven elephants poisoned in Atlanta in 1941. Sudan died in winter quarters on December 25, 1947.

For their valuable assistance on this article, my thanks to Stuart Thayer, Richard Reynolds, Bill "Buckles" Woodcock, Bill McCarthy of the Circus World Museum, the Ringling Museum Archives, and the Pfening Archives.

Two of the pygmy elephants on Ringling-Barnum in 1937. Pfening Archives.



## Still Available ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN CIRCUS

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The salient history of the 158 circuses and menageries that toured America in this period. Included is the first attempt at a history of the famed Zoological Institute of 1835-1837.

This book consists of a 154 page narrative, a 250 page appendix (containing the routes, rosters and programs) and an index with over 500 names of managers, agents, band leaders and performers. It took seven years to research and it's yours for only \$30.00 postpaid.

**Stuart Thayer**  
430 17th Avenue East  
Seattle, WA 98112



In 1849 an equestrian sensation burst upon the English scene. "Young Hernandez," described by William Walllett as one of the most accomplished equestrians who ever entered the arena, made his English debut, with Franconi's Company at Manchester.<sup>1</sup> Walllett referred to him as James Hernandez, yet he became known to millions simply as "Hernandez." Apart from being American, and said to be barely fourteen years of age when he appeared soon afterwards at Astley's, little was written of his background.

It is now known that "Hernandez" was the performing name of Mickey Kelly, born in 1832 and was at some time adopted by John Robinson, the American rider and circus owner.<sup>2</sup> In the United States he first appeared with Charles Bacon's Circus in the winter of 1837. At that time he was billed as Master Robinson.<sup>3</sup> James was with his adoptive father and trainer in Charles Bacon and Edwin Derious's Circus, formed in Norfolk, Virginia, which then visited Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia in 1838. The company also included the riders H. P. Madigan, G. L. Cadwallader and John H. Glenroy, clown Alex Rockwell, comic singer Enam Dickinson, and the jugglers Peter Morris and John Roberts. This circus opened its 1839 season at Augusta, Georgia, and then toured with about the same company as in 1838 although no hard evidence indicates either Robinson's presence on the show.<sup>4</sup> The name "Hernandez" was adopted in 1840, with the American Theatre Troupe, where John Robinson and his pupil Juan Hernandez were the principals in the 1840-41 winter season in New Orleans.<sup>5</sup> Other members of this troupe included the riders Levi J. North and Eaton Stone and the clowns Gilbert Eldred and George Stone. Sol Smith, the theatrical manager, wrote: "The great feature of the circus company was a little boy, adopted son of our equestrian manager, whose name changed from Jimmy Robinson to Juan Hernandez. He was a wonderful child, not over eight years of age, and could execute the most difficult and dangerous equestrian feats, besides singing comic songs and acting children's parts on the stage."<sup>6</sup>

During the winter of 1841-42, Sol Smith took to Havana a troupe consisting of John Robinson, Juan Hernandez, Levi J. North, Eaton Stone and Denison W. Stone, plus about twenty others of lesser note, and about forty horses.

In 1842 John Robinson began partnership with Joseph Foster, who had come to America in 1837 with Thomas Taplin Cooke. Juan Hernandez, whose fame had increased year by year, was their prin-

# THE AMERICAN HERNANDEZ VISITS ENGLAND

BY JOHN M. TURNER

cipal attraction. Aged just ten, he was called "the wonderful lad." In 1843 "Young Hernandez" was advertised as "the pet, the pride, the champion of the arena." Although aged eleven, the publicity claimed that he was only eight. At his benefit in Charleston, Virginia: "Hernandez performed in seven acts, bespeaking his talent; he appeared as a four-horse rider, principal rider, singer, dancer of hornpipes, posturer [now called contortionist], tumbler and finished riding on his hands."<sup>7</sup>

In 1846-47, Master Hernandez was in Sands and Lent's company at the New York Bowery Amphitheatre. In 1849 he arrived in England.

William Batty, who had the lease on Astley's, recruited Hernandez to Astley's Royal Amphitheatre in early March 1849. It has been claimed that Professor Risley (Richard Risley Carlisle), the originator of the eponymous act, introduced Hernandez to the London scene, perhaps arranging his visit to England. The *Illustrated London News* published an engraving of Hernandez, with accompanying text.<sup>8</sup>

Many will have read George Speaight's description of Hernandez's equestrian performances at Astley's in 1849, and may see reproduced the above men-

tioned illustration of a youthful boy leaping one-legged on a broad-backed pad horse. To quote: "There was nothing very sensational about the feats he achieved; he sprang from the horse's back while standing and kneeling; he skipped with a small hoop or riding whip, passing it three or four times round his body in one leap; he leaped over flags spread three abreast, nearly nine foot in breadth, facing both front and back; he stood on one foot, with the

other in his hand and on his head. But it

was the manner in which he presented it that made his performance so remarkable. Every feat was cleanly and successfully accomplished at the first attempt. . . . And he did it all with a beautiful smile upon his countenance and a singular gracefulness. . . . All that we have seen achieved by Ducrow . . . are transcended by Hernandez . . . undoubtedly the greatest living equestrian."<sup>9</sup>

In the following month Hernandez appeared with William Cooke's circus in Birmingham, billed with Miss Emily Cooke and Miss B. Woolford, later touring Lancashire, Cheshire, Yorkshire and Shropshire. In September, Hernandez returned to Franconi's, in the Manchester Free Trade Hall, where he was greeted with showers of bouquets, remaining until the close on Saturday, 22nd September. "America's Star in Equestrian" then joined Pablo Fanque's Equestrian Company in Liverpool where he appeared before crowded houses. Other members of Fanque's company included Bowman the clown, the Lafayette family of riders, and Leclercque the juggler. Both Pablo Fanque, a black Englishman born in 1796, and "Young Hernandez, the Graceful American Equestrian," visited Astley's for special engagements toward the end of November. Fanque had meanwhile opened a second establishment in Sheffield at the Royal Amphitheatre erected in the Cattle Market where Hernandez was most enthusiastically received. Later, attendance suffered due to the absence of Fanque and Hernandez in London for Mr. Batty's benefit. During the remainder of the 1849-50 season, Hernandez divided his time between the Liverpool and Sheffield circuses, the "star" during alternate weeks.<sup>10</sup>

Young Hernandez at Astley's Amphitheatre. Author's collection.



Cooke's Royal Circus in Brighton advertised in January 1850 that an engagement with Young Hernandez was pending. Competition for his services was fierce, but he did appear at Cooke's during February. When Cooke's appeared in Derby during June Master John Henry Cooke, aged fourteen, was judged a promising youth, "close on the heels of Hernandez."<sup>11</sup> Her-



nandez had set the standard by which other riders were judged.

Hernandez's whereabouts during most of 1850 and 1851 are unknown, but he performed with Welch, McCollum and Company's Great American Troupe in Liverpool, and Franconi's Circus in Nottingham and Leeds during their 1851-2 winter seasons.<sup>12</sup> But Hernandez had developed plans for his own company. Popularity had brought its financial rewards.

The 11 January 1852 *Era* announced that the Royal Pavilion Circus in Brighton had been taken over by Young Hernandez, now all of seventeen years of age! His clowns were the great Little Wheal, famous for his antics, and Swann, with his drolleries. Although he revisited Franconi's the following month in Leeds, by May Hernandez had entered into partnership with his fellow American Rufus Welch who seems to have dissolved his partnership with McCollum. Welch, Hernandez and Company's American Circus and Mammoth Marquee then toured Bristol, Clevedon, Weston-super-Mare, Bridgwater, Taunton, Wellington, Exeter, Sidmouth, Lyme Regis, Bridport, Weymouth, Launceston, Tavistock, Plymouth, Exmouth, Honiton, Chard, Yeovil, Sherborne, Wincanton, Wells, Frome, Bath, Trowbridge, Devizes Warminster, Salisbury, Southampton, Portsmouth, Chichester, Bognor and Littlehampton. Meanwhile, without Hernandez, Fanque's fortunes had foundered and he was forced to sell much of his equestrian stock. Sometime during the second half of 1852, Welch's partnership with Hernandez seems to have dissolved. For the 1852-3 winter season, Hernandez opened his own American Circus in Leeds.<sup>13</sup>

Early in 1853, Hernandez formed a new partnership with another American, Eaton Stone. James and Pauline (nee Hinne) Newsome were constant members of the troupe. We find Hernandez and Stone's American Circus in Bolton in March 1853; then in Bradford with Messrs Ryland, Knight and Russell; in Beverley and Hull with Signor and Mdlle. Ameson, Arthur Barnes the champion vaulter (91 somersaults at one trial), the Brothers Elliot with their trapeze and *la perche* acts, and Mr. G. Knight the Shakespearean jester. Later in 1853 the company started its summer tour, using a circular marquee capable of holding 3,000 persons, and initially visited Sheffield and later Cambridge where Arthur Barnes achieved only 82 consecutive somersaults.<sup>14</sup>

A report in the 30 July 1853 *Cambridge Chronicle* of the visit of the American Circus to Cambridge, includes one of the

most vivid descriptions of Hernandez's performances: "The name of Hernandez led us to expect something above the common run of things, and we were not disappointed. Though we have repeatedly seen his acting, we saw him again with great zest. He was the 'Star,' always performing his part, whatever character he assumed with a uniqueness and brilliancy entirely his own. His 'personifications' are natural, Irish, Scotch or English--there he is 'to the life.' Then his riding. It is marvellous. Then his drollery, it convulses his audiences; in a word it is the 'Young Hernandez.' The others well supported him."

Venues visited later in the summer of 1853 included Leamington, Coventry, Worcester, Leicester and Derby. In October, at Nottingham, the company was reported to be due to visit London. E. T. (Edward Tyrrell) Smith had attracted Hernandez, Eaton Stone, and the Newsomes, together with Arthur Barnes and clown Tom Barry, to his Drury Lane Circus. Within a year he was due to make Hernandez and Stone, and



James Newsome an offer they could not refuse!<sup>15</sup>

In Liverpool, Pablo Fanque, having recovered his circus fortunes, reopened at the Amphitheatre for the 1853-4 season. In January 1854, Young Hernandez, "the first horseman of the day," Arthur Barnes the great champion vaulter; and the Brothers Elliot were billed to appear there, "from the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane." In February they were joined by the American Little Ella, the most daring and poetic equestrienne, who later turned out to be a man, or perhaps an hermaphrodite! Hernandez was described as "no longer the graceful boy, but the fearless active man." But Hernandez and Stone had not relinquished their own company, and returned to open in Bolton, taking the Newsomes with them.<sup>16</sup>

Sometime during February, Hernandez and Stone persuaded James Newsome to join their partnership, advertising themselves in Bolton as Hernandez, Stone and Newsome's American Equestrian Establishment, with Stone and Newsome the "Rival Champions of America and England." Newsome was English, having been born in Newcastle in 1824. The new company, then moved to Manchester, opening in late February in Fountain Street where the old Theatre Royal had once stood. It was supplemented by Messrs. Sidano, Zameno, Moseley, also La Petite Anne and Josephine Zameno. Hernandez and his fellow artistes stayed in Manchester until the end of April 1854. In

March, the partners "at enormous expense have formed an engagement with the celebrated Mr. W. F. Walleth, the King of Clowns, who will make his first appearance on March 6th."<sup>17</sup>

The *Manchester Courier* of 18 March 1854 noted: "Re-engagement of Mr. W. F. Walleth, clown, in consequence of the numerous families who could not go since the opening of the circus . . . engaged at much expense the extraordinary grotesque, the Great Little Wheal, who will appear on Monday next, March 20th."

Miss Kate Cooke was recruited to the company sometime in March, and created a hit on her milk-white steed Snowdrop. "Miss Cooke has received a present from Mr. Samuel Hinton, harness-maker and Saddler of the Westminster Bridge Road, of a magnificent saddle, very richly adorned," commented the *Era* of 19 March 1854.

From Manchester, at the end of a good two month season, Hernandez and company moved to Bradford for a short visit at the beginning of May, for four days, due to commence tenting on the 12th with Mr. H. Rutlet the agent in advance. They seemed to have returned to Bradford for the fair on 19th, 20th and 22nd of May. During the 1854 summer tour the company visited Wakefield, Barnsley, Doncaster, revisited Sheffield once more, Chesterfield, Wolverhampton, eventually arriving on the south coast in August at Landport in Lake Lane.<sup>18</sup>

By October 1854, with a need for winter quarters, the company moved to Plymouth and opened a splendid circular building erected by James Matcham near the Octagon on Union Street. Apart from the partners themselves, artistes during the during the 1854-55 winter season included vaulter Arthur Barnes (who by now had managed 94 somersaults at one trial); clowns Henry Brown and Tom Swann; Mdles. Sidoni and Rosalie; Mesdames Fontaine, La Place, Guerriere, Fabian and Lucille; and Mr. Ryland and Mons. Parisoni. Henry Brown, with his inimitable electioneering speech, and his comic burlesque "Pop Go the Russians," was very popular and the doors of the "Equestrian Palace" were besieged night after night by crowds of expectant visitors.<sup>19</sup>

Walleth, the King of Clowns, whose comic powers were claimed to be comparable only to those of the renowned Joe Grimaldi, was scheduled to make his first appearance on Monday 30th October. In November, at his next to last appearance, Walleth presented "The Hernandez" with a splendid gold medal as a mark of appreciation from his friends, admirers and brothers. The medal represented two shields, each bearing a suitable inscription and surrounded by a border of



laurel, the union of the arms of England and America. A comic pantomime was arranged for the Christmas holidays. At the end of January 1855, after a most successful season, the company left, "being wanted to join those in Bath."<sup>20</sup>

It is not known what happened in Bath, but it is clear that at some stage all three partners dissolved their partnership and sold their concern to E. T. Smith, the London impresario. Eaton Stone became the manager of the Drury Lane Company. E. T. Smith's Royal Circus appeared in Manchester at the Philharmonic Hall in March 1855. We also find it in Oldham, and in Huddersfield at the Fairground during May 1855, using a marquee seating 3,000 to 4,000. The circus was also called E. T. Smith's Leviathan Equestrian Company, originally Hernandez and Stone's, or, as in Worcester in July 1855, as Hernandez and Stone's Circus under the proprietorship of Mr. E. T. Smith. Hernandez, no longer a proprietor, appeared as an artiste for Smith in Manchester in late April. No doubt he appeared elsewhere as a freelance rider during the six months before he returned to America. A clown Hernandez was billed at James Cooke's Glasgow in June 1855, but this may have been another artiste appropriating the name.<sup>21</sup>

Meanwhile, James Newsome had made a new alliance with the much older Pablo Fanque. Pablo Fanque and Newsome's Allied Circus appeared in Sheffield in April 1855. Newsome parted from Fanque the following year and founded his own company which endured until 1889.<sup>22</sup>

The 21 October 1855 *Era* reported the departure of Young Hernandez for America that month. He never returned to the United Kingdom.

Mickey Kelly, alias James Robinson, alias Juan Hernandez, but famous as just "Hernandez," is reported to have died at Singapore while on a tour of the Far East on 19th July 1861, not yet thirty years of age.<sup>23</sup> His master, John Robinson, survived until 1888. A "Young Hernandez" appeared again in Britain in 1881, but that was another person and is another story.

The writer is grateful for information received from the following members of the CFA of Great Britain Circus History Group: Cyril Bloor, Roger Rudderham and George Speaight.

## Further Adventures of Juan Hernandez, 1856-1861

By Stuart Thayer

Hernandez departed England in October 1855. L. B. Lent, who was, as usual, operating a winter show at the National

## Will Perform This FRIDAY EVENING APRIL 3d, 1857.

### PROGRAMME:

GRAND STAR AND WALTZ ENTREE—Composed of eight Gentlemen, each mounted on beautiful and highly caparisoned steeds, led by Jos. A. Rowe.

HERCULEAN FEATS, with Cannon Balls, by J. E. Robinson.

TUMBLING—by the Company.

Mr. Rowe will introduce his Leaping Mare, VIRGINIA.

ZEPHYR AND FLORA, by Mr. and Mrs. Austin.—A beautiful and elegant act on two horses.

LA PERCHE EQUIPOISE—By Franklin and Fisher.

THE SHIPWRECKED SAILOR, by Hernandez.

CORDE VOLANTE, by H. Franklin—Who will hang by his hands, heels, and feet by the neck.

CORDE ELASTIC—By Madame Austin.

THE OLYMPIANS—An elegant act on two horses, by Franklin and Hernandez.

BAR, OF DEVIL ACT, by John E. Fisher—On his highly trained California stand, Wild Bill.

PRINCIPAL ACT OF HORSEMANSHIP, by James Hernandez, the greatest Equestrian Artist in the world, whose style and execution are universally pronounced the perfection of art.

MONS. D'EVANT, in his extraordinary and astonishing Contortion.

The whole to conclude with the laughable Adrope entitled THE TWO CLOWNS, or Dumbity on a Large Scale.

Doors open at 7 1/2—Performance to commence at 8.  
(Lower half of facsimile program)

Program of Rowe's Pioneer Circus in 1857 listed James Hernandez.

Theatre in Philadelphia signed him in March 1856; the last performance of the company was on April 19.

For the summer season of 1856 Joe Pentland hired Hernandez to be his principal rider and advertised him as "the greatest of living equestrians." Sam Stickney and Romeo Sebastian were the other riders with the company. At the end of the tour Pentland sold his circus and went to England.

Hernandez, one of the great travelers among the circus fraternity, then went to California. Richard Risley hired him in February 1857 for a short-lived hall show in San Francisco. From then until January 1858 Hernandez performed in San Francisco with several circuses, choosing not to go on the road with any of them. He was with Lee & Bennett in February and March, with J. A. Rowe in March and April, Lee & Bennett again in May, and with the renamed Rowe Circus in July and September. He stayed in San Francisco and let the companies come to him.

In January 1858 Rowe & Marshall put a troupe together for a trip to the Hawaiian Islands (called the Sandwich Islands at that time) and Hernandez accompanied them. In a letter to John Center, who had rescued Rowe's circus in 1857, Rowe said that Frank Whittaker and Hernandez had been drunk ever since the company

reached Honolulu in early February. The letter was dated February 7 and is reproduced in Albert Dressler's book on Rowe.

Rowe went on to Australia, arriving in Sydney on April 26, 1858. He was not so disgusted with Hernandez to not take him along. Rowe advertised him as "the premier horseman of the world." From Sydney they went to Melbourne, where we lose track of them.

Hernandez was back in Philadelphia in November 1858, and again signed on with Lent's winter show, which occupied the National Theatre from November 8 to April 2, 1859. Though he was then twenty-seven years old, he was advertised as "Young Hernandez." Being a short man, as are most bareback riders, Hernandez at five-foot three was able to assume a much younger role than actuality indicated.

The 1859 road season saw Hernandez on Harry Whitby's Metropolitan Railroad Circus and 1860 found him on L. B. Lent's roster.

Several sources, none contemporary, give Hernandez' death as occurring on July 10, 1861 in Singapore. It is not known what company he was with at the time.

### FOOTNOTES

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18. *Era*, 7 May 1854, 14 May 1854, 28 May 1854, 4 June 1854, 2 July 1854; *Bradford Observer*, 18 May 1854; For Landport date see item 415, Madden Playbill Collection, Portsmouth Library.
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20. *Plymouth and Devonport Weekly Journal*, 26 October 1854, 2 November 1854, 21 December 1854; *Era*, 7 January 1855.
21. Oldham Central Library, newspaper index; *Huddersfield & Holmfirth Examiner*, 12 May 1855; *Era*, 1 July 1855, 22 April 1855, 10 June 1855.
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23. Hippisley Cox, *op. cit.*



**T**he dearth of information on Victor Pepin, the second great circus proprietor in America—John Bill Ricketts being the first—has finally come to an end with the publication of a genealogy of the Pepin family. Prior to this research almost nothing was known about the man.

T. Alston Brown in his serialized history of the circus in the *New York Clipper* said Pepin was born in Albany, and taken to France as a child, and returned to America as a circus proprietor in 1806 (it was actually 1807). George Stone wrote that Pepin was born at the corner of North Market Street and the Colonie in Albany, and went to France at age two (in reality, he was thirteen). Greenwood said that Pepin was descended from a French neutral of Acadia and was born in Philadelphia.

Delane C. Ferguson of Coppell, Texas, has just published *Victor Pepin, Circus Career, Descendants and Ancestors. 1760-1900*, in which she gives us the first documented account of Pepin's family. Mrs. Ferguson is Pepin's great-great-granddaughter.

Pepin's father, Andre Pepin, was born in France about 1735, and migrated to Canada at the age of twenty-five or thirty. He married Judith Dauni in 1760 in Boucherville, Quebec, across the St. Lawrence River from Montreal. Far from being a neutral in the American Revolution, as Greenwood wrote, Andre Pepin, a captain in the Canadian militia, joined the American forces that invaded Quebec in November 1775. Once having committed himself to the American cause, he had no choice but to emigrate. He moved his wife and children to New York State. He served in the army until 1779.

It was in Albany that his fourth child and first son was born. This was Victor Adolphus Pepin and the date March 8, 1780.

The family moved to the west shore of Lake Champlain in 1786, where land was set aside by the state to be given to Canadian and Nova Scotian refugees who had served in the Continental Army.

Andre Pepin went to France in 1793, according to one source, and never returned, thus effectively abandoning his family which at the time consisted of his wife and four children. However, he took his son Victor with him, and that is where we lose our man until 1807.

# VICTOR PEPIN'S GENEALOGY

By Stuart Thayer

As is known, Pepin and his partner, Jean Breschard, brought their circus troupe from Spain to Boston in 1807. They toured in this country until September 1814, when the partnership was dissolved, and Pepin's career from then

Handbill illustrating Pepin's horse "Mentor" in the midst of fireworks. Indiana State Library.



## CIRCUS.

POSITIVELY THE LAST PERFORMANCE.

This evening, Saturday October 25th, 1823.

The performance will commence with

### The Grand carousal.

By four Turks fighting with Broad Swords and Lances, and conclude by catching ribbons on the poles of their Lances—each horse, 100 paces.

Mr. Weir will perform many elegant feats; he will pick from the ground a handkerchief and a watch—his horse in full speed.

THE PEASANT will perform the comic scene of the

Mr. Coty will perform the comic scene of the

THE Grand Almande, On two horses.

Will be performed by Mr. Coty & Miss Payne after which Miss Payne will ride by herself, & perform many feats of horsemanship.

Mr. Walter will perform on one horse many surprising feats and conclude by JUMPING the GARDENS.

THE RAISING OF THE WIND OR THE GREAT VAULTING (BY MR. SARGENT) Who will leap from the right to the left of his horse, and when the horse leaps over the boards, he will at the same time leap over the boards and then

The elegant horse Conqueror, will perform the part of a PEASANT, he will bring at command, a Hat and a Handkerchief and conclude by taking a FLYING LEAP over three horses.

Master Galatin, the much admired youth, will perform astonishing feats for one of his age, and conclude by riding on his head.

The Clown's art of Horsemanship. By Mr. Ignace.

This brilliant representation will conclude with the double horse MENTOR surrounded with

## FIRE WORK.

Door to be opened at half past 4, performance to commence at half past 4—Tickets to be had at Mr. Lee's—price 50 Cents

until 1827 are rather well documented. What follows here are facts about Pepin's personal life as unearthed by Mrs. Ferguson.

Pepin married in 1809. His bride was Martha Townes of Philadelphia. They eventually had six children, four of whom survived childhood. Of these, only one became a performer, the eldest, Narcissa Carolina (1811-1865). She may have appeared with her father as early as 1822, although 1826 appears more likely. She married a fellow performer, Robert Weir.

In June, 1826, Martha Pepin filed for divorce in Louisville, travelling from Philadelphia to do so. The case was heard in February 1827. Henry Westbay, a ticket seller in 1824, testified for Mrs. Pepin, saying that her husband did not supply her with enough to live on, and was living in "an adulterous state with a lady employed as a circus rider." This may have referred to Miss Payne (we find no other women with the company), who married Peter Coty, another performer, in 1826. Martha Pepin was granted a divorce in February 1827, and married Henry Westbay that April. They were together thirty-six years, had one son, and are buried in Louisville.

Narcissa Pepin also had marriage problems. She filed for divorce from Robert Weir in 1829, claiming that he abandoned her in Nashville. Weir, who had been tried for murder in St. Louis while with the Pepin Circus, was apparently given to favor the bottle. Henry Westbay, by then her step-father, appeared as a witness on her behalf. Granted the divorce, Narcissa married again in 1831. She had eleven children by her second husband William Wilson, a carpenter in Louisville. Narcissa is the only one of the persons mentioned here of whom a photograph exists; even that was taken when she was fifty.

As for Victor Pepin, the man who took the circus into the West, he appeared briefly as a riding instructor in Baltimore in 1831, and was tendered a benefit in Louisville by Fogg & Stickney in 1837. He died in 1845, and is buried in Fairview Cemetery, New Albany, Indiana. His grave is not marked, but he has a more enduring monument to his credit: the Walnut Street Theatre, which he built in 1809, still stands in Philadelphia.

Our thanks go to Delane Ferguson for allowing us to use her research material for this article.



Some Kansas towns restricted all types of entertainment on May 30, Memorial Day. The Grand Army of the Republic held this day to be as sacred as any ordinary Sunday, but by 1891, the GAR had peaked and was beginning a slow but constantly accelerating decline. The competition for Sieber & Company at Baxter Springs was described, in the *Baxter Springs News* June 6: "Memorial Day, 1891. The Graves of Departed Comrades Made to Blossom With Sweet Flowers."

"Last Saturday was memorial or decoration day, a day set apart as a national holiday upon which the living should pay honor to the dead soldiers of the late war by holding appropriate services and decorating the graves of the fallen heroes with flowers. Last Saturday was very much like its predecessors, in fact there would have been nothing new or strange about it had it not been for the circus which exhibited in our town on the same day. This probably increased the attendance to some extent and gave our city a more lively appearance."

"The large crowd present nearly all day began to arrive early and by 10 o'clock, when the circus parade took place, Military street was fairly jammed with people. The memorial services were not begun until after dinner. At 1 o'clock Baxter post No. 123, G. A. R., with a large number of visiting comrades, and Blunt camp No. 14, Sons of Veterans, mounted, were drawn up in line at the post hall on south Military street, and to music of the national airs played by the Baxter band, marched north to the Springs park. The services began with music by the band and a song by the choir. Then followed prayer by Chaplain M. Doty and reading of orders by Capt. Hugh Erwin. After music by the choir Miss Emma Hutchins gave a very excellent and appropriate recitation. The choir gave another choice selection after which Rev. Frank W. Otto, the orator of the day, was introduced and for nearly an hour held his hearers with marked attention in an address which for eloquence and soul stirring patriotism will bear close comparison with any delivered at any other point in this broad land upon that day. It was such an address as the old soldier delights to listen to and many were the favorable comments passed upon it. We regret that our limited space forbids the publication of the address in full."

"At the close of Mr. Otto's speech the members of the G. A. R. and their friends took vehicles of various kinds and after moving again in procession through Military street passed on to the national cemetery where the decoration services were completed. First was the ritualistic service of the G. A. R. during which the old veterans placed upon their former

comrades graves the sweetest and most beautiful flowers of the land, of which there was an abundance on hand. The cemetery was literally filled with a mass of people and at the close of the decoration exercises the crowd assembled about the massive monument erected to the memory of the victims of the Baxter Springs massacre and listened with close attention to a gem oration by Capt. Hugh Erwin of Keelville in which the speaker with his accustomed eloquence did honor to his comrades, his country and himself. Those who heard it say it was one of the very best short speeches ever delivered at this place."

"The exercises closed with the singing of 'America' by the assemblage, and the people wended their way homeward satisfied that the day had been well and honorably observed. The weather was delightful, though quite warm."

In another column: "N. E. Tyner says he will be much obliged if the fellow who took his shovel from the barn will return the same."

An advertisement in the *News* on circus day announced the "mile and a half of parade" would appear at 9:00 A. M. and the first performance would begin at ten o'clock. Three shows were given and the attendance was good. The GAR and the Sieber Company did no harm to each other.

Only Prof. Nolle suffered from the circus. The *News* reported that, "The circus was too much for Prof. Nolle's illustrated lecture last Saturday evening and he was favored with quite a small audience. This is no argument against the quality of his entertainment, however."

The most spectacular event of the day was a vigorous argument over a license for the side show between George Sieber and Marshal Hemstreet. The *News* presented the imbroglio from the Marshal's point of view.

"The Other Side of It."

"It is a safe rule always to calculate on there being two sides to a question or thing. Last week we gave the 'outside' of the matter concerning the arrest of the Sieber brothers by our marshal, and now, in justice to him and his deputies, we desire to state briefly the gist of the matter as they received [sic] it at close range. To begin with, the fault for the whole occurrence rests upon the advance agent,

who made a contract for a license which he failed to have the mayor sign as he should have done and told the city clerk he would do. This contract, the circus men thought, covered all the license necessary, but as our ordinance requires license for side shows the mayor instructed the marshal to collect \$2.50 additional. The marshal informed Sieber of this before the first show began and he promised to see the mayor and attend to it. Then again in the afternoon Hemstreet went to Sieber about it and he again promised to attend to it, but failed. Then in the evening just before the performance began the marshal learned the additional license had not been paid, and went to the ticket wagon for it. After some parleying Sieber told Hemstreet to write a receipt and he would pay it, but while the receipt was being written Sieber said to his doorkeeper, Cole, 'Call up the boys,' whereupon Cole blew a whistle and ten or more fellows came rushing up with missiles [sic] ready for a fight and Sieber swore he would pay no more license. Hemstreet was accompanied by John Jones and W. E. Donaldson and had they not been there he would



likely have failed, but as it was the men were held back at the muzzle of a pistol and Sieber finally came out of the wagon and went with the officers to the mayor and paid the license. They were mad, however, and while going back to the tents they again threatened the marshal with violence if he came around them any more. Hearing this Hemstreet at once arrested the Siebers and was after another of the gang, but could not find him. By the time the police judge and attorney were found it was too late to begin a trial and rather than stay over until Monday they paid the light fine assessed and the costs, and were allowed to go. Under such circumstances as is stated by the marshal and his deputies they were certainly justifiable in what they did. If the advance agent had seen the mayor as he agreed to do, or if Sieber had seen him during the day as he promised they certainly would have had no trouble. They were trying to work the 'bluff' racket, but it didn't bluff in this instance."

The Sieber brothers were fined \$2 and costs, amounting to \$8 each. The show moved out of Kansas for exhibitions in



Seneca, Missouri on June 1. Early in September the show entered Arkansas and in November made winter quarters in Brooks and Brewster's stable and wagon yard in Greenwood, Arkansas. Despite reports of a successful season the show was broke and never again took the road. The equipment was attached for debt.

The creditors received nothing for Sieber and Barry owned nothing. Mrs. C. E. Sieber of Topeka, the mother of George Sieber, filed suit during the winter for the recovery of her property which she had leased to Sieber and Barry, and \$7,000 damages. In June of 1892, the court at Ft. Smith, Arkansas, awarded her the attached property.

The last word on Sieber & Company's Mammoth Circus, Museum and Menagerie was a two sentence report in the Topeka State Journal on July 14, 1892: "The Sieber show has returned to Topeka. Two carloads of paraphernalia reached here yesterday."

Listed below are the confirmed dates for the Kansas exhibitions: April 11-18, Topeka; April 20, Carbondale; April 21, Burlingame; April 22, Osage City; April 24, Lyndon; April 24, Quenemo; April 27, Osawatomie; April 29, La Cygne; April 30, Pleasanton; May 1, Mound City; May 2, Blue Mound; May 4, Moran; May 5, Iola; May 6, Humboldt; May 7, Chanute; May 8, Buffalo; May 9, Toronto; May 11, Eureka; May 12, Severy; May 13, Howard; May 14, Longton; May 15, Elk City; May 16, Independence; May 19, Cherryvale; May 20, Parsons; May 21, McCune; May 22, Cherokee; May 23, Pittsburg; May 25, Weir; May 26, Columbus; May 27, Joplin, Missouri; May 28, Galena, Kansas (probable); May 30, Baxter Springs; June 1, Seneca, Missouri.

George Sieber, following his debacle as a showman, tried several occupations before he settled down as manager of some of his mother's numerous rental properties in Topeka. The story of George Sieber came to an end on Saturday night, June 24, 1911.

The Topeka State Journal carried the story, part of which follows: "Crazed from drink, Patrick Hohan, an ex-convict who served a term in the county jail for selling liquor, deliberately shot and killed George Sieber, his friend and neighbor; and was himself killed by Charles Hess when he attempted to add Hess' life to his list of victims. The tragedy occurred late Saturday night in the little yard at the rear of Sieber's home, 305 Quincy Street, and followed a threat by Hogan that he would kill Sieber if some of the tenants were not removed from the house at 301 Quincy Street where Hogan made his home.

"Standing behind Sieber with a lantern in his left hand, Hagan fired one barrel

from a shotgun loaded with No. 5 shot. The muzzle of the gun was in three feet of Sieber's head and the charge tore away the top of the man's head. Crazed from drink and in the excitement Hogan whirled and attacked Charles Hess, who was sitting in a swing with Sieber at the time of the tragedy. Frank McGehee, who was standing near the swing talking to the two men, ran for help as he saw Hogan fire the fatal shot and attack Hess. In the conflict between Hess and Hogan, the gun was broken near the stock. With the barrels of the weapon in his hands Hess struck Hogan twice near the base of the skull. The man died in the emergency

Herald used by Willie Sells during the 1891 season. Pfening Archives.

# \* SELLS \*

## COLOSSAL LONDON

# RAILROAD SHOWS



**The One Splendid Amusement Institution of America!**

— THE SUPREME TEST OF MERIT IS SUCCESS. —

**CHAMPION BAREBACK RIDER**



**WILLIAM SELLS**

THE PEOPLE'S FAVORITE

AND

**KING OF ALL RIDERS**

**THE LARGEST SCHOOL OF EDUCATED DOGS**

IN THE WORLD!

50 IN NUMBER! 50 OUR ARTISTS

POPULAR PERFORMERS

**BEST SHOW IN THE UNIVERSE**

**NOTICE A REASONABLE QUESTION**

"Will question is often asked: 'How can a first-class show afford to exhibit at such low prices of admission?' The answer is simple: 'The profits of a show do not come from the amount charged for single individuals, but from the total amount received from the public. The crowded tents at cheap prices are far more profitable than small exhibitions at high prices, and we believe the larger income can be realized from the lowest price of admission.' We also believe the shortest cut to honest wealth is to give the people plenty for their money, a low price of admission brings increased patronage. The larger the volume of business the larger the income. It takes no more to show to five thousand people than to a hundred."

**FREE EXHIBITION**

**HERDINANDEZ POTTER**

WILL LEAP FROM THE TOP OF A 100 FT TOWER

AT 10 O'CLOCK EACH DAY

**FREE TO ALL!**

Sells' Colossal London Railroad Shows

**ADMISSION ONLY 50c.**

WILL EXHIBIT AT

hospital at the police station two hours after the trouble.

George Sieber is buried in Topeka cemetery.

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The spring of 1891 found Topeka in a frenzy of circus rumors. The rumors mainly concerned the Fulford show which Abe Fulford wanted to put on the road again in an effort to escape the financial morass in which he was rapidly sinking, but it was not to be. The fact was that Fulford's partners, William Lytle and Jesse C. Elliott, could agree on nothing and Elliott forced the auction of the show to recover whatever he could.

Two other shows were actively preparing to take the road in April. Siebert & Company was the first to open and its story was related in the preceding pages. The third show, which was financed by Allen Sells in repudiation of his sell-out agreement with his brothers, Ephraim, Lewis and Peter, began the season with a three-day stand in Topeka under the management of Allen's adopted son, Willie.

The New York Clipper on April 18 carried a call for personnel to report to Sells Colossal London Olympian Shows in Topeka. Department heads were listed as follows: bandmaster, Frank Taylor; boss canvasman, H. Holey; boss hostler, Ed Schmidt; property boss, J. W. Ryan; wardrobe boss, Bob Warner; and equestrian director James Stowe. Simon Greenspan and Sam Hahn were in charge of advertising and programs. Bill posters were busily papering the town on April 13, announcing three days of exhibitions April 30, May 1 and 2, on a lot at Ninth and Madison Streets. Newspaper advertising began on the 26th. The Topeka State Journal of April 29 carried the following story: "CIRCUS DAY A-COMING

"Another Topeka Amusement Enterprise. Starts Out with Flying Colors.

"To-morrow will be circus day in Topeka, and Topeka will not only furnish the audience, but also the circus. It is a home enterprise and one that Topeka people will take pleasure in attending, not only because it is owned and managed by Col. Allen Sells and his popular son, Willie Sells.

"Col. Sells is one of the most public spirited men of our city, half a dozen handsome buildings on our business streets being monuments to his public spirit and enterprise. Willie Sells has grown up in Topeka and is one of the most popular young men in the city. Topeka will turn out in force to-morrow and give the new circus a warm welcome.

"Fifty thousand dollars in cash has been put into the new enterprise, and everything has been purchased fresh and new. One hundred and twenty-five people have been employed, and sixty horses



and ponies bought. A handsome train of special cars has been constructed and everything is ready for giving the finest performance of a one-ring circus ever seen in this country for 10 and 20 cents.

"The performers have been collected from many lands. Joe Lewis, the human cork-screw was telegraphed to in Paris, and arrived a short time ago; Ledesma and Jerome, trapeze performers, came from the City of Mexico where they have been during the winter; Drayton, the strong man, is from London; Mullaney, the Irish clown, has lately been connected with a circus at Queenstown, Ireland. The home of the four Walton brothers, acrobats, is at Toledo, Ohio. The Edgerton sisters, trapeze artists, are from Chicago; James Bell, the tumbler, hails from Cleveland. The brass band was hired in a body at Grand Rapids, Michigan; Miss Louie Stowe, horsewoman, resides when at home at Wauseon, Ohio; Harry Potter and wife, who walk the high wire, belong at Cincinnati; Charlie Rench, the double somersault man, is a Cincinnati resident; Prof. Norris, with his trained ponies and dogs, lives at Manhattan, Kansas; McDonald and wife, equestrians, are from Philadelphia; and Louie Plamondon, slack wire artist, is a Topeka boy.

"Thirty-five different acts comprise the ring performance. The costumes are all of those designed by Mrs. Allen Sells, herself. After giving two performances daily Thursday, Friday and Saturday, the circus will leave on its special for the east. It will make a stand for a week each at St. Louis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, Toledo, Detroit, Philadelphia; then to Coney Island, Long Branch, and other watering places."

The Topeka *Daily Capital* on April 12, ran a story which pertained mainly to Willie Sells: "Mr. Sells began riding at the age of 8, being taught in the art by the experienced equestrian, Ferdinand Tburinaire. Performing for several seasons with the world-renowned James Robinson, he had the benefits of that accomplished horseman's advice and tutoring. In 1886 young Sells went abroad to see if anything was to be learned in the arenas of the old world, and during his stay in London he appeared at Covent Garden circus. William Sells is the best dresser in the circus business, his wardrobe always be-

## A Mighty Stupendous Aggregation!

The World's Grandest and Best Amusement Institution!

## SELLS' Colossal London Olympian Shows!



Male and Female Champions Culled From the Arenic World!

Everything as advertised: Oceans of pure fun! Fifty times more for the money than ever given before! The wise and good, its patrons everywhere.

The Perfection of Equestrianism! One of the Best Circus Acts! Startling Aerial Novelties! The Largest School of Dogs ever seen (No number). By Far the Largest and Best Circus Extant!

Will Exhibit in all its entirety at

TOPEKA.

3 Days Commencing Thursday, April 30th. 3 Days

Two Grand Performances Daily, 2 and 8 p. m.

The People's Popular Prices, 10 and 20 Cents.

Location of show grounds, Eighth and Madison st. Street parade at 11 o'clock on Thursday.

This ad announcing the opening of the Sells show appeared in the Topeka *Daily Capital* on April 26, 1891. Kansas State Historical Society.

ing in the best of taste and manufactured of the richest materials without regard to expense. Of magnificent physique and manly appearance, he is 'a picture on horse-back,' that never fails to awaken the wildest enthusiasm. His reception in San Francisco on his last visit was an ovation of which any artist might be proud. It took the united efforts of seven circus attaches to bear the floral tributes to the dressing room. Popular with the public, honored and respected by his associates, he stands a noble representative of equestrianism as carried to perfection by an American in an American arena. Mr. Sells is equally at home in a four-horse act as in his notable 'Bounding Jockey,' and reins and rides a quartette of racing steeds with skill and precision.

"The new show will soon take its place among the leading amusement ventures of the year, and will have the good wishes

of everybody in Topeka for a successful season."

It was, perhaps, the last time Willie was described as "a noble representative" of anything. Willie was known as a "snappy" dresser and that is nearly all of the truth in the above story.

An ad in the Topeka *Daily Capital* described the show as "The World's Grandest and Best Amusement Institution!" which was "By Far the Largest and Best Extant!" and featured "The People's Popular Prices--10 and 20 Cents."

The *Journal*, which was an evening paper, reported that, "The parade of Sells' Popular Price Circus this morning [April 30] was witnessed by a large number of people gathered alone Quincy street and Kansas avenue. It made a very pretty sight, all the uniforms and costumes being bright and new, and all the spangles sparkling brightly."

The *Oakland News*, published in a village just a few blocks east of Topeka, saw the parade in a different light. "Yesterday [April 30] Sells' Great Railroad Circus had a street parade. They had no animals, but there was one an-i-mule, and a small procession spread out a long ways. P. S. There were two wagon loads of dogs."

It was true, the show had no animals, not even an elephant, but this did not discourage the crowds, as the *Capital* reported May 1:

"PEOPLE TURNED AWAY.

"The Sells Circus Greeted by an Enormous Concourse of Appreciative People.

"The long looked for opening of William & Cos' colossal show, a Topeka institution, headed by a Topeka young man, whose fame is world wide, occurred yesterday, and at both the afternoon and evening performances the canvass was tested to its utmost to cover the immense concourse of people glad to honor so magnificent an enterprise. The street parade was quite a novel one, and, like the performance, remarkable for its brand new and clean cut appearance. The old and worn out features were apparent in neither.

"People were turned away last evening. Every inch available for seating the surging mass of people was occupied early, and from the grand entree to the magic words 'all over' were heard, a continued round of applause greeted the varied new and novel acts. There was but one ring. What a relief from the eye-crossing, three



ring performance. Everything was like clockwork—not a hitch, or bobble, and without exception the most finished ring show seen in Topeka for many a day. Among those most noticeable among the performers were the four Walton brothers, whose ladder and acrobatic acts were entirely new and truly wonderful; Mons. Ledesema and Jerome in a daring pole-climbing and balancing act, and upon the flying trapeze; Mr. and Mrs. James Stowe, the well known leaders in equestrian performances, who are well known to Topeka audiences, and who never fail to master new feats for each succeeding season. The appearance of Louie Plamondon, the slack wire artist, and one of Topeka's sons, was the signal for deafening applause. He is undoubtedly rightly named the 'king of the slack wire.' The dogs elicited their share of attention, and Prof. Norris was envied by many his grand collection of knowing canines, who seem so to enjoy their work. The jumping and tumbling, led by Mr. James Bell, was all first-class. The crowning event of the evening, however, was the appearance of Mr. William Sells heralded by the sounding of trumpets and his handsome snow white horse in charge of a footman in full cockney livery. Mr. Sells appeared in full dress, his entire costume being made up of red, white and blue satin, that in which he appeared before the crowned heads of Europe when engaged with Barnum. He was royally attended by a valet in gorgeous livery, and doffing his hat and overcoat proceeded to delight his audience with one of the finest turns known among bare-back riders. The oft repeated opinion that Billy Sells was getting too heavy to ride was given a fearful black eye last night. He can and did ride as no man ever rode before in Topeka, and was the recipient of a handsome basket of cut roses at the conclusion of his act. All in all, the circus is first class. It is all that is advertised and more. There are no animals; but that is rather 'chestnut-sque' nowadays, for one menagerie seen all are seen. The Sells show is above par, and Topeka is proud of the enterprise which will spread her from ocean to ocean.

"The band under the leadership of Prof. Taylor is certainly one of the finest circus bands in the country."

Apparently the show did satisfactory business on all three days.

A student in the Sells School of Circus Management, an alias for the School of Hard Knocks and Dirty Tricks, Prof. C. Norris, had a small difficulty in getting out of town.

cess in furnishing healthful and recreative instruction and amusement, assures us that our present gigantic step in organizing and building on a scale of magnitude and grandeur greater than before, will meet with the same liberal and unstinted support that was accorded us in our less enormous undertakings.

"We can truthfully assure the American millions of amusement seekers that none of our previous noted enterprises can form the least comparison to the great-ness and enormity of our present undertaking. The same high tone of morality which has ever characterized our exhibitions will be rigidly maintained, and we pledge our personal honor that no disreputable characters or gamblers will be allowed to follow the truly moral show.

"Our grateful remembrance of the American public's appreciation of our great efforts assures us the success of a thrice doubled patronage for this the crowning triumph in a long succession of noted victories, in memory of which we beg to subscribe ourselves, The people's servants, SELLS' COLOSSAL LONDON

OLYMPIAN SHOWS."

Both the *Champion* and the *Atchison Daily Globe* were favored with paid advertising. The *Atchison Daily Patriot* received none and consequently saw Willie's show in a different light. On April 30, the *Patriot* presented some exclusive background information: "When Sells Bros.' show was divided last fall in Topeka, Bill Sells, a young acrobatic dude, took a section to start a show of his own. He took a couple of camels and a cage of monkeys from the old show on his salary and hired a few amateurs, and will proceed to invade the cities and villages of Kansas next week, trying the experiment in Atchison Monday and Tuesday. Bill kept his 'menagerie' in Topeka all winter, but at the opening of spring the board of health made him move out of town. He figures it out that the running expenses of the concern will be fourteen dollars a day, and has fixed the price of admission at 10 cents to cover the same."

On opening day the *Patriot* remarked that, "Little Willie Sells, an ambitious son of the old man Sells, has a show in Atchison to-day, and proudly headed a parade of dogs and horses down Commercial Street this morning. Willie wore very

A MARKED AND SIGNAL ADVANCE IN THE WORLD'S AMUSEMENT ANNALS, CREATING A

## NEW ERA IN CANVAS ENTERTAINMENTS

Presenting in grand consolidation an AVALANCHE OF STAR ATTRACTIONS, which it were well for all rivals to stand from under.

THE ONLY SHOW OF STRICTLY NEW FEATURES

A STUPENDOUS AND FAULTLESS ENTERTAINMENT, to which the patronage of a critical and discerning public is invited.

NONE BUT CHOICE, ACCEPTABLE FEATURES

Ever presented in our vast canvas inclosures. Every where indorsed as

### A SHOW OF THE PEOPLE

And for the people, not a pretentious exhibition advertising much and displaying little, but giving the people the worth of their money.



**Prof. C. Norris,**  
THE FAMOUS ANIMAL TRAINER, INTRODUCING HIS  
**UNRIVALED TROUPE OF ACTING PONIES**

Prominent Actors, Daring Equilibrists, Classic Posturing,  
Trapeze Sensations, Bucking Bronchos, Bicycle Feats,  
Dextrous Feats, Ladder Acrobats, Grotesque Clowns.




**MR. JAMES STOWE**  
Known and acknowledged among all Bareback Hurdle Riders as "THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE," essaying and accomplishing the most extraordinary and thrilling feat with phenomenal nerve and certainty.

**THE HIGH STANDARD OF PURITY**  
Ever characteristic of our Great Moral Shows has been maintained, and our patrons may rest assured that all our Combined Entertainments are the very best that money, time and labor can produce. To please the public has been our constant aim, and that too, without regard to cost. Our daily expenses are twice as large as those of any other show, and to meet this we have, as we merit, the patronage and confidence of the public, for which they have our thanks.

**ONE TICKET ADMITS TO ALL!**  
COME AND ENJOY TWO HOURS OF DELIGHTFUL RECREATION.

**MISS MARIE McCLOSKEY!**  
First appearance in America of this dashing, delicious, mobile Bareback Equestrienne, whose superlative grace and intrepidity took Olympia, London, by storm, and received the tribute of continuous popular ovations.

Illustration of Prof. Norris' act in the 1891 Sells herald. Pfening Archives.

"The reason why the dogs at Sells' circus did not perform Saturday night," according to the *Journal* of May 5, "was because they were attached. They belong to Prof. C. Norris, the trainer, and were attached for debt. Norris owed Hall and O'Donald \$24 for printing. They went before Justice Furry and caused the attachment of twenty-nine dogs and a monkey. Allen Sells settled the debt."

Sells Colossal London Olympian Shows was a new aggregation which appeared for the first time in Topeka on April 30 but in handouts distributed to the papers in Atchison for the exhibitions of May 4 and 5, Willie had already begun by inference to link his show to that of his uncles. The following appeared in the *Atchison Champion* on May 1: "TO THE PUBLIC.

"In presenting to our millions of friends and patrons our new consolidation of monster shows, we beg leave to thank the public for its uninterrupted and liberal patronage during the past. The favor with which the American people have been pleased to crown our yearly growing suc-



loud clothes and was accompanied by a valet. As Atchison is the first town the circus will make, it having originated at Topeka, the costumes were all clean, and the parade not bad for a ten cent outfit."

The admission of "not bad" must have been painful for the editor.

The *Patriot* had a few other comments: "Because the Bill Sells' show only has enough attractions to fill one ring, he is advertising that the three ring circus is no good."

"Gambling is permitted about the entrance of Sells' circus. The police department should stop it."

"The circus left town last night; so did several fine dogs."

"Willie Sells is too fat to ride show horses."

"Some Atchison chuckaluck men are following up Bill Sells' circus."

The *Patriot*, however, was forced to admit that, "A big business was done in Atchison."

A report in the *Globe* on May 5, the work of a press agent, confirmed the volume of business.

"The Wm. Sells circus last night attracted a tremendous audience, hundreds being unable to find seats. The performance was one of the very best ever seen in Atchison. Although the price of admission is but 10 and 20 cents, the company is as large and competent as you usually see in a 50 cent show. The performance will be repeated this evening. The grounds are on Main Street, near the Greenleaf & Baker elevator."

In another column the *Globe* recorded the presence of a gambler: "A man named H. M. Payette was arrested by Officer Yates last night for trying to work the shell racket. He was not caught in the act, and no charge could therefore be preferred against him this morning. He was ordered to leave town. Officer Yates accompanied him, and when the sharper got to the depot, he refused to proceed further. Officers Yates and Smith then re-arrested him as a vagrant."

Kansas audiences made a sport of smothering concert announcements and on opening night "the people set up such a howling that not a word could be heard. The confusion continued for fully five minutes, the people cheering to keep the man from announcing the concert. Finally young Sells came out, started the band, and no concert was announced."

The Only Big Railroad Show Coming This Year Will Exhibit at

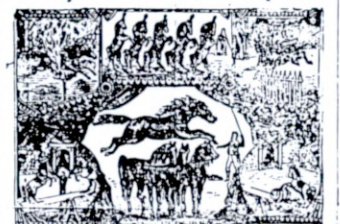
**Coffeyville,**  
BUT NOT UNTIL  
**Tuesday, Aug. 18.**

**★ SELLS' ★**

**United Monster Railroad SHOWS**

—IN MIGHTY UNION WITH THE—  
**Barrett Bros.**

—MAGNIFICENT MUSICAL SPECTACLE—  
**Cleopatra's Visit to Rome!**



**James Bells' School of Performing Horses**

100 ★ Circus Stars, Headed by the Champion ★ Horseman, ★ 100

**William - Sells.**



**WAIT! WAIT! WAIT!**

The Two Big Combined Shows Come  
**AUGUST 19th,**  
AND NOT BEFORE.

This is Official. Pay no attention to other reports.

The Only Big Show Coming to Montgomery County This Year.  
The Gates of Wonderland thrown Wide Apart  
**TOWERING MASTODON OF TUNTED SHOWS!**  
BOASTING BY RIGHT OF EMERGENCY, BY RIGHT OF MIGHT, BY RIGHT OF SUPERBITY, AND BY POPULAR WILL, THE EXALTED HILLERS IN AMUSEMENT REALMS.

**LEMEN BROS'**

Famous Roman Hippodrome.

**2-RING CIRCUS-2**

Two Elevated Stages.

**Five Continent Menagerie,**

—IN MIGHTY UNION WITH—

**GREAT NEW YORK AND NEW ORLEANS SHOWS**

Monster World Fair, Zoological Institute, Triple Circus, Metropolitan and Great Golden Menagerie.

—WILL EXHIBIT AT—

**COFFEYVILLE, 19**

WEDNESDAY, :: AUGUST



2-BIG RAILWAY EQUIPAGES-2

The Only Show in America having anything new to offer. Recently reconstructed, newly painted, and all modern, comfortable and thoroughly the latest. Amusement shows of the kind and the number of the 100.

The Whole Mammoth Show Presented at Once!

THE ONLY SHOW IN AMERICA HAVING ANYTHING NEW TO OFFER. Recently reconstructed, newly painted, and all modern, comfortable and thoroughly the latest. Amusement shows of the kind and the number of the 100.

THE ONLY SHOW IN AMERICA HAVING ANYTHING NEW TO OFFER. Recently reconstructed, newly painted, and all modern, comfortable and thoroughly the latest. Amusement shows of the kind and the number of the 100.

2-Performances Daily-2

The Sells and Lemen ads appeared next to each other in the *Coffeyville Journal* on August 14. Kansas State Historical Society.

The *Champion* had the final word on the Atchison engagement: "Jack Brown's dog has joined Sells' circus. Mr. Brown objected at first, but discovered later that the dog had been sold to the circus men by a boy, he withdrew his claim rather than cause the boy's mother, who is a widow, any trouble."

Three "drunkards" were arrested, according to the *Champion*.

Sells Colossal London Olympian Shows disappeared from the Kansas press following Atchison until August when Willie returned using a stolen title. The *Columbus Advocate* carried an announcement on August 6. "SELLS BROS. CIRCUS COMING. Will Exhibit in Columbus Wednesday, August 12th."

"A circus is coming! Sells Bros. Big Show will exhibit in Columbus, August 12th. The first advertising brigade arrived here the first of this week to bill the city and country."

"This car will be followed in a few days

by another advertising car, and the country will be flooded with attractive advertising matter, announcing the coming of the great show."

"Sells Bros. have one of the largest and best shows on the road. They were in Lebanon, Missouri, last year and had the largest circus crowd ever attracted to the city. Their circus is even grander and better this season and the reputation of Sells Bros. Monster Shows is sufficient to draw an immense crowd. They will be in Columbus August 12, for one day only, and a great crowd will be here. The people will come for miles around to see Sells Bros. mammoth circus and menagerie, on Wednesday, August 12, next week."

A handout in the *Columbus Star-Courier* reported a new feature: "They have lately added a new feature, Clara Delano's wonderful troupe of performing lions, six in number. This is the only lady in the world who has ever performed such a number of lions loose in the ring. Remember the date, August 12th."

There is no confirmation of the presence of Clara Delano and her lions in any report during the remainder of the season. The absence of comment

suggests the act may have been another lie.

Neither the *Modern Light* nor the *Advocate* made any mention of the show following circus day, but the *Star-Courier* had a few derogatory statements concerning gambling: "It may not be impertinent to ask whether, in paying license, the Sells Show Co. paid on the gambling department."

"Some young gentlemen—possibly some older ones also—bought a lot of high-price experience at the show yesterday."

"It is said the show which was here Wednesday belonged to the gamblers; anyhow, some of the Columbus boys think the gamblers ran it."

"The circus drew a crowd."

The *Oswego Independent* of August 7 ran two handouts that not only defined the quality of the exhibitions but demonstrated Willie's concern for women and children.

"THE GREAT SELLS SHOW."

"Coming to Oswego, August 13th! The blazing sun of the exposition sky transcendently reinforced! The sublime ocean of enchanting sights marks one of the



most signal periods in the amusement annals. The most notable gathering of circus stars ever seen in any age or country; heroic Olympian games and Caledonian sports, bigger, better, richer and grander than ever, presenting more novelties, sensational features and solid entertainment than any other tented exhibition on earth; a famous institution of the country; a century in advance of its contemporaries, an iconoclastic thunderbolt that will purify, elevate and strengthen the world of amusements. Mark well the date; you, see, hear and be convinced.

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"Whenever possible we advise the ladies and children to attend our afternoon performances; they are equal in every respect to the evening ones, and less likely to be crowded, besides many things can be better inspected by daylight; and it is much easier to look after the little ones. The Sells' Colossal London Olympian Shows take great pleasure in stating that no show of any kind ever before had the number of special ushers and uniformed attendants to look after the wants and see that all patrons have good and comfortable seats. We can positively assure every one of the most courteous and polite reception in all the departments of our show, and ladies and children may, with safety, attend our exhibitions without male escort. Remember the day and date, Thursday, August 13th."

After the show had come and gone the *Independent* proclaimed, "Talk about your frauds, Sells' Circus that exhibited here last Thursday was the grandest of them all. Oswego people were bored beyond limits. There is no height or depth to the brazen-faced snide that Sells carries with him. Willie Sells has a reputation that will draw crowds. But should he ever put in an appearance in Oswego again he will receive a wide berth. The old time dead beats and gamblers followed at his heels working the 'shell racket' on unsuspecting victims."

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Limitless in its Special and Exclusive Equestrian, Gymnic, Aerial and Zoological Attractions, European Circuses contribute their very brightest stars. A Centralization of America's Foremost Performers Constituting a

GREAT TRIPLE ARENA  
Of Impending Feats and Features.

### OUR MAMMOTH MUSUEM AND MENAGERIE

With all its superb, rare and costly collection of beasts, birds and reptiles, including the finest specimens of Hippopotamuses, Rhinoceroses, Giraffes, Sea Lions, and nearly every known species of Lions, Bears, Hyenas, Tigers, Tapirs, Horned Hornos, (sic), Ostriches, Monkeys, Serpents, (Tribuna etc.) A grand traveling Zoological garden affording to all the children in the land the most appropriate lesson in natural history it is possible to place before them.

Grand Street Parade At 10 o'clock a. m., on the day of the Show!

Note our Very Low Price of Admission! One Ticket Admits to Both Big Shows! **ONLY 25c.**

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right. As Will Sells' show is strictly a Kansas institution, we hope the story of the show being in financial straits is not true, and that next year it will come around on fourteen cars instead of seven, and have an elephant, because no show can be a success without an elephant."

Somewhere along Willie's route Dale Stapleton, age 15, joined up. How long Dale was on the show is unknown, but at Salina he was recognized by a former school mate, the son of Mrs. J. P. Morton.

"The Morton boy," according to the *Salina Republican*, "immediately informed Mrs. Morton, and she, knowing the boy was wanted at home, telegraphed to his father. She received an answer at once, telling her to have the boy detained and he would start immediately to bring him home (Assumption, Illinois). Mrs. Morton notified the police and Dale was arrested and taken to the residence of policeman Reeves to await his father's arrival. The boy is perfectly willing to leave the show, however, and will be glad to be taken back home. He is cured of his desire to rove and will hesitate long before he leaves his father's comfortable home again."

Salina in 1891 had five newspapers, but only the *News* and the *Union* commented on the attendance and they could not agree. At the matinee the *News* saw "a large audience most from the rural districts." The *Union* reported that; "Wm. Sells' show was not a very large one, neither was the crowd in attendance Saturday afternoon and evening."

The *News* further remarked that, "Salina merchants had about all the trade they could handle Saturday."

The McPherson *Daily Republican* on circus day, September 22, ran the following: "Sells' show came in from the north at 10 o'clock this morning. They have seven cars, which is a good showing for a simple circus. The parade at one o'clock was all that could be made with the material it takes to run a circus. The performance this afternoon was of the usual kind seen in a circus, tumbling, trapeze performances, wire and rope walking, riding and the jokes of the clowns, etc. The performance was good. The audience this afternoon was not large owing to the fact that the show had only been advertised since Saturday. They will no doubt have a good crowd this evening."

"The usual side show with the giant, giantess, little men and women and other wonderful curiosities is present and liberally patronized." The *Republican*, it will be noted, confirmed the report in the *Salina Journal* that Willie's show moved on seven cars. The *Republican* commented on the side show but a short announcement in the McPherson *Democrat* asked and answered the following question. "She has reached the enormous weight of 840 pounds. Who? Why Big Maggie, the fat woman

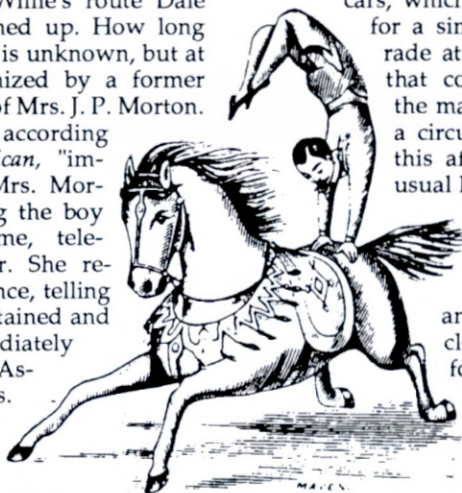
with Sells big show. McPherson, Tuesday, September 22."

On Thursday, September 24, Willie played Alma, and earned the following review that appeared in the *Signal*: "Willie Sells' show was in town Thursday of this week, also some gambling fakirs who manipulated the shell game for the amusement of the boys—and also to their sorrow. The show had lots of canvas spread and they had twenty-eight dogs. The show paraded up two squares on Missouri Street, around the National Bank and down the back alley for camp. It was the first show that ever gave our citizens a back-alley parade. The attendance was small, as but little notice was given, and the people are waiting for the big show. [Wallace, October 5]."

"Sells show exhibited here Thursday of last week to very small audience," according to the *Alma Enterprise*. "The parade was about three minutes long and becoming disgusted with themselves they turned into an alley and disappeared. As usual with such shows a number of sharpers and gamblers were with them and succeeded in getting some of our foolish people to invest some money with them. It was the worst show that ever struck our city."

Manhattan had two shows in one week. T. K. Burk made the town on Tuesday, September 22, and Willie on September 25. Neither show gained any support from the Manhattan press but the *Mercury*, September 30, commented that, "You can't find many people who went to Sells' circus who are willing to admit it. It was the worst circus fraud that ever struck the city."

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# CIRCUS REPORT

## America's Favorite Show Business Weekly

Published by Don Marcks  
525 Oak St., El Cerrito, CA 94530-3699

Subscription rates per year: U. S. delivery \$35; Canada and Mexico \$45  
Overseas surface mail \$50; Airmail \$90.



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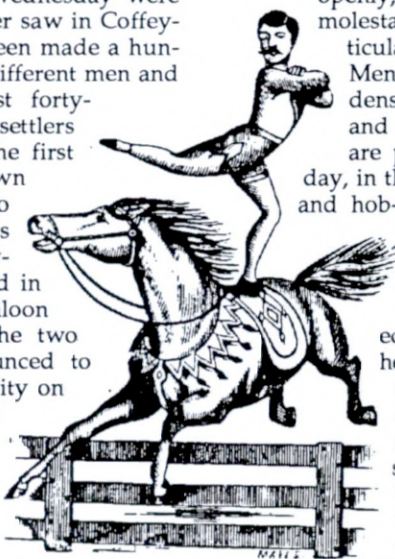


deeming features about it. They paid their bills promptly. The Walton Brothers are splendid performers, and their acts were well received. The riding of William Sells was extraordinary. There were other good features as well as many poor ones. Those people who came to the grounds to see the 'grand balloon ascension' are still waiting to see it go up. But why go on. It was indeed a big 'sell.' But people will be humbugged you know. Shows of this kind never mean to perform one-half they advertise, and all they are after is the money. This one got off with doing very little of what they agreed to do. They humbugged our business men and everybody else who had anything to do with them. The Sells show is a great big fraud."

In another column the *Journal* reported, "Two Terrible Days in Coffeyville."

"Last Tuesday and Wednesday were the two worst days I ever saw in Coffeyville." This remark has been made a hundred times by as many different men and women within the past forty-eight hours. Several old settlers who were here when the first brush was cut on the town site have been heard to say that Tuesday's doings were away ahead of anything they had witnessed in the palmy days of the saloon and festive cow-boy. The two shows that were announced to give exhibitions in this city on the above days, had vied with each other in advertising their coming. Consequently, a large crowd of people was attracted here from all parts of the county and from a large portion of the Indian Territory. The city was filled with a cosmopolitan mass—men of almost all nations, tongues and kindreds. The white man was in the majority but the Indian came in with a good second. The illicit retailers of whiskey, beer and kindred poisons, were amply prepared for the occasion. Four bar rooms ran wide open from Monday morning until—well, they are not closed at this writing. The vilest rot gut whiskey and the most poisonous and filthy beer that ever a poor, deluded victim of strong drink undertook to swallow, was dealt out by a dozen or more bartenders throughout the day and night. Reeling, staggering, frothing, fuming, swearing, swaggering specimens of fallen humanity in the shape of men and boys, occupied the pavements of our principal thoroughfare, wallowed in the filth of our alleys, filled our business houses, whooped and howled around the circus grounds and created a perfect Pan-

demonium all over the city. The unfortunate and easily misled red men were the most numerous of those who got helplessly and horribly drunk. The police force failed to appreciate the gravity of the situation, and fights, brawls, whooping and yelling were not looked after until the matter became unbearable to a few citizens who insisted on having order maintained. Then the Indian fell a victim in most instances, and the wiley white man and the shrewd whiskey seller were not molested. The attempt to maintain order was begun at a late hour and at the wrong place. The arrest of a drunken Indian had no terrors for the man who made him drunk. But drunkenness and rowdiness were not the only disagreeable things that occurred on Tuesday and Wednesday. Fakirs, frauds, gamblers, cheats and robbers plied their vocations



openly, fearlessly and without molestation. This was particularly true of Tuesday. Men were inveigled into dens and dives and drugged and robbed by fellows who are parading our streets today, in the guise of good citizens and hob-nobbing with law-and-order men and women. The victims were mostly Indians, and they would not prosecute because of the inherent fear that the red man has of getting into court, but they gave names and localities to some of their friends in the city who will make it hot for the rascals who did the dirty work.

The next deplorable feature of the two days rioting, was the evident unconcern of the city administration in the premises. The marshal was conspicuous for his absence. When a fight was in progress in the rear of Masonic Block, he was at the show grounds, and while the shell men were robbing unwary citizens at the show grounds, he was down town. Of the big array of special policemen, Billy Houston and Ed. Jackson were the only ones who seemed to understand what they had been appointed for. One of the specials himself got drunk early on the first day, raised a fight and went to the calaboose. The Mayor flew around like a half sled in a new ground, was everywhere but where he was most needed, fumed at the jointists, promised great things and did nothing. At two o'clock on Wednesday he ordered the joints closed. If he could do this on Wednesday afternoon why could he not have done the same thing Monday [sic] or Tuesday morning?"

The article continued with a strong attack on corruption in the city government which permitted the lawlessness of Tuesday and Wednesday. The two circuses drew the crowds and the shows brought with them fraud, gambling and fakirs, but it was the authorities that let the situation get out of hand. The drunkenness was strictly a local production.

Once again—No one ever died of thirst in prohibition Kansas.

The *Chetopa Advance* on August 14 carried a handout in which Willie made a grand gesture that could not possibly cost him any money.

"\$5,000 Reward.

"We, the undersigned, proprietors of Sells' Colossal London Olympian shows, will pay the above amount to any charitable institution in this city if any proof is given that for the season of 1891 this immense confederation of big shows, or any part or feature, thereof, will or does exhibit apart from the grand entirety of exhibitions. There is but one big Sells' show that will visit your city this season, and the grand enterprise will exhibit at Chetopa Thursday, Aug. 20th."

How does one divide a seven car show?

In the same column Willie announced an extra added attraction: "The greatest feature of them all! The great German Aeronaut, Herr Von Langston, who has just arrived from Berlin has been specially engaged for this grand performance. He will make a grand balloon ascension and parachute jump from the clouds, at the show grounds. Come one and all and see this great man. At Chetopa August 20."

The *Chetopa Democrat* also announced "The greatest feature the world has ever produced," with an interesting variation.

"On Thursday, August 20th, the people of Chetopa and vicinity will have the chance to see free of charge Herr Plamondon Drayton, the world's greatest aeronaut, who has just arrived in this country from Paris, France, where he was engaged to make balloon ascensions by the Paris Exposition managers. On Thursday next he will make a grand balloon ascension and parachute from the clouds. This will be your chance of a lifetime to see the greatest feature this world has ever produced. The ascension will be made on the show grounds of Sells' Circus at Chetopa, August 20th. Free to everybody."

Von Langston or Drayton, the ascension must have been awesome for the show had no balloon.

Lemen Brothers billed Chetopa for August 31, eleven days behind Sells Colossal London Olympian.

The *Olathe Kansas Patron* referring to Willie's exhibitions of September 8, stated



that, "The Sells show did not attract the attention a circus usually does. It may be that the people are waiting for the Wallace Co. show on the 17th."

The Olathe *Leader* claimed that, "The rain of Tuesday was bad for the one horse circus but good for the farmers."

An advertisement in the *La Cygne Weekly Journal* for the exhibitions of September 9 brazenly proclaimed that, "SELLS AND BARRETT ARE COMING with all of their superb, rare and costly collections of beasts, birds and reptiles, including the finest specimens of Hippopotamus, Rhinoceros, Giraffe, Sea Lions, and nearly every known species of animals, Lions, Bears, Hyenas, Tigers, Tapirs, Horned Horses, Gnu, Ostriches, Monkeys, Serpents, Pythons, etc. A GRAND TRAVELING ZOOLOGICAL GARDEN, affording to all the children in the land the most appropriate lesson in natural history it is possible to place before them."

Willie came to Wichita on September 16, ten days ahead of Wallace & Company. According to the *Wichita Daily Eagle* the "Sells show gave two performances yesterday and notwithstanding counter attractions drew large audiences. Quite a varied performance was given in good style. There was the cannon ball juggler, the human snake, the flying trapeze and a number of additional acts which were much appreciated. Mr. Wm. Sells gave an exhibition of fancy and bareback riding. Mr. E. L. Brannan is the assistant general manager this season and everywhere his efforts to please and accommodate the large crowd was noticeable and much appreciated. The company left after the performance last night on a special train for Nickerson, Kan."

The old game of "beat the license" was played with great success in Wichita. The *Daily Beacon* related the story of how Willie's agent "WORKED THE MAYOR."

"It seems the license fees charged by the city for circus exhibitions may be from \$100 to \$200, but the ordinance gives the mayor authority to make the amount less if his judgment so dictated. Wallace's show, which will be here on the 26th, will pay \$150, and couldn't get it for one cent less. The manager of Sells' show heard this and laid his wires to get to exhibit for \$100. He came to town and inquired from friends how he could touch any soft spot that may be about the head of the chief executive. The friends told him that Mayor Carey was very fond of flattery and acting on this cue he sallied forth to meet his majesty.

"His first act was to put up at the Carey hotel, so that he could better work the

mayor by having the prestige of being a patron of the house. Pretty soon the mayor appeared and the sleek circus man went for him according to instructions.

## SELLS' BIG RAILROAD SHOWS

The Only Big Show Coming,

WILL EXHIBIT AT

PLEASANTON, THURS., SEP. 10



Two Grand Performances Daily

Champion of champions from every clime. The Leading Lights of the Arenic World. Nothing like it in the History of amusement enterprise. An Entertainment for Ladies and Children. The first Big Show to visit this city.

Most Novel and Unique Parade

Will take place at 10:30, Thursday, Sept. 10. Cheap excursions will run on all railroads to the

Great Show at Pleasanton, Thursday, Sept. 10.

Will also exhibit at La Cygne, Wednesday, Sept. 9.

This Sells ad appeared in the *Pleasanton Herald* on September 4, 1891. Kansas State Historical Society.

"How are you, Mr. Carey," said he.

"I am all right, sir," replied the mayor.

"A fine house you have here, Mr. Carey."

"Yes sir, it is."

"You are the mayor of the city, I understand?"

"Yes sir, I am that."

"I understand that you are not only the mayor in name, but that you are the mayor in fact, too," said the sleek circus man with emphasis.

"Yes sir, I am. Whatever I say goes."

"That's what I have been told by everybody," said again with emphasis.

"Who have I the pleasure of talking to?" said the mayor full of self sufficiency.

"I am the advance agent for Sells' circus," said the showman, "and, by the way, I would like to have you fix a license fee for our show here. It is a small show and we can't pay much. I expect to make arrangements to have our people all stay here at the hotel; it is such a pleasant place to stop at."

"I'll fix that for you," said the mayor.

"I'll fix it all right for you," and he did fix it at the small sum of \$25, or \$75 less than the agent expected to pay and \$125 less than Wallace's man had to pay, but Wallace's man didn't stop at the Carey, he stopped at the Manhattan.

"The mayor not only made the fee so exceedingly small but he actually hitched up his team and drove the agent all round the city and showed him all the places of interest.

"The circus man was jubilant over his triumph over Mayor Cary's weakness and he told many good stories in the saloons at the expense of the Mayor. He described him more accurately than any man who has known him for twenty years could and mimicked him so perfectly that if one could hear and not see him would be willing to swear, that the mayor was talking. He not only mimicked his language accurately, but he mimicked his actions so cleverly that the crowd in the saloon was in convulsions of laughter all the time."

The Nickerson *Argosy's* only recognition of the show was two sentences on the 24th concerning the exhibitions of September 17. "The show here last week was considerable of a sell or fraud. Several of their bills were left unpaid."

Sam Hahn, the advance agent, called on the *Lindsborg News* on September 14 and placed an ad for September 18, the day of the exhibitions. On the 25th the *News* stated "The circus came and went. The NEWS ventures the assertion that it will be a mighty 'cold day' when another such institution will be permitted to exhibit in the city."

Directly below a handout in the *Salina Evening News* announcing the coming of T. K. Burk's Consolidated Shows on September 23, was Willie's explanation of why no Salina papers carried advertising for his exhibitions of September 19: "SELLS BIG RAIL ROAD SHOWS. Will positively appear at Salina September 19th. N. B. Owing to the fact that there was a mistake whereby our Advertising material was sent to Salina, Missouri, instead of Salina, Kansas. We could not properly advertise our shows, thus we offer this explanation. Yours Very Respectfully, Wm. Sells, Manager."

According to the *News*, the smallest thing about Willie's show was the street parade.

The *Salina Journal* on September 24 presented an interesting view of the Colossal London Olympian. "A dray full of dogs, half a dozen ponies, three snakes and Willie Sells exhibited in Salina Saturday. There was a rumor afloat Friday evening the show had 'busted' and could not get here, but they put in an appearance all



right. As Will Sells' show is strictly a Kansas institution, we hope the story of the show being in financial straits is not true, and that next year it will come around on fourteen cars instead of seven, and have an elephant, because no show can be a success without an elephant."

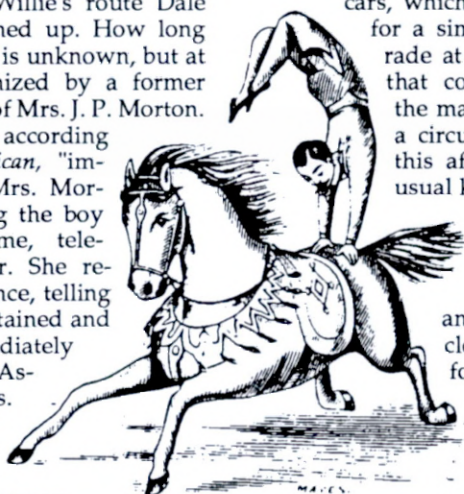
Somewhere along Willie's route Dale Stapleton, age 15, joined up. How long Dale was on the show is unknown, but at Salina he was recognized by a former school mate, the son of Mrs. J. P. Morton.

"The Morton boy," according to the *Salina Republican*, "immediately informed Mrs. Morton, and she, knowing the boy was wanted at home, telegraphed to his father. She received an answer at once, telling her to have the boy detained and he would start immediately to bring him home (Assumption, Illinois). Mrs. Morton notified the police and Dale was arrested and taken to the residence of policeman Reeves to await his father's arrival. The boy is perfectly willing to leave the show, however, and will be glad to be taken back home. He is cured of his desire to rove and will hesitate long before he leaves his father's comfortable home again."

Salina in 1891 had five newspapers, but only the *News* and the *Union* commented on the attendance and they could not agree. At the matinee the *News* saw "a large audience most from the rural districts." The *Union* reported that; "Wm. Sells' show was not a very large one, neither was the crowd in attendance Saturday afternoon and evening."

The *News* further remarked that, "Salina merchants had about all the trade they could handle Saturday."

The McPherson *Daily Republican* on circus day, September 22, ran the following: "Sells' show came in from the north at 10 o'clock this morning. They have seven cars, which is a good showing for a simple circus. The parade at one o'clock was all that could be made with the material it takes to run a circus. The performance this afternoon was of the usual kind seen in a circus,



tumbling, trapeze performances, wire and rope walking, riding and the jokes of the clowns, etc. The performance was good. The audience this afternoon was not large owing to the fact that the show

had only been advertised since Saturday. They will no doubt have a good crowd this evening.

"The usual side show with the giant, giantess, little men and women and other wonderful curiosities is present and liberally patronized."

The *Republican*, it will be noted, confirmed the report in the *Salina Journal* that Willie's show moved on seven cars.

The *Republican* commented on the side show but a short announcement in the McPherson *Democrat* asked and answered the following question. "She has reached the enormous weight of 840 pounds. Who? Why Big Maggie, the fat woman

with Sells big show. McPherson, Tuesday, September 22."

On Thursday, September 24, Willie played Alma, and earned the following review that appeared in the *Signal*: "Willie Sells' show was in town Thursday of this week, also some gambling fakirs who manipulated the shell game for the amusement of the boys—and also to their sorrow. The show had lots of canvas spread and they had twenty-eight dogs. The show paraded up two squares on Missouri Street, around the National bank and down the back alley for camp. It was the first show that ever gave our citizens a back-alley parade. The attendance was small, as but little notice was given, and the people are waiting for the big show. [Wallace, October 5]."

"Sells show exhibited here Thursday of last week to very small audience," according to the *Alma Enterprise*. "The parade was about three minutes long and becoming disgusted with themselves they turned into an alley and disappeared. As usual with such shows a number of sharpers and gamblers were with them and succeeded in getting some of our foolish people to invest some money with them. It was the worst show that ever struck our city."

Manhattan had two shows in one week. T. K. Burk made the town on Tuesday, September 22, and Willie on September 25. Neither show gained any support from the Manhattan press but the *Mercury*, September 30, commented that, "You can't find many people who went to Sells' circus who are willing to admit it. It was the worst circus fraud that ever struck the city."

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# CIRCUS REPORT

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# CIRCUS LIFE AND ADVENTURE OF ADAM BARDY

Every so often, story books are written that tell of someone who has lived an interesting and adventurous life, and there are times that some local person may come along who has experienced such an adventure in his life's journey. Of local interest is the story of Adam Bardy, who began his "adventure" in 1915, at the age of eight, running away with the great Buffalo Bill Wild West Circus, when the Circus was playing in his home town of Webster, Mass.

This beginning adventure was of very short duration, as Adam met up with gypsy fortune tellers the very next day, and, in their generosity, they gave Adam trolley car fare money, and Adam returned home.

In Adam's teenage years, he lived with woodchoppers in shanties in the woods, and finally in a deserted farmhouse. At the age of seventeen, Adam joined the Ringling Bros. & Barnum and Bailey Circus. Other large and small circuses were to be Adam's life, until, in 1929, Adam met up with Kentucky Mountaineers, and the life of a bootlegger was to begin. A thrilling adventure as a big-time bootlegger was Adam's lot in life, until the Conn. State Police wiped out the operation. Adam escaped from custody, and a fugitive's existence lasting seven long years began. During this time, Adam learned all about fortune telling, a life he followed for many years. After that seven years, Adam gave up and turned himself in to the police. He went on to raising beautiful meat and show rabbits, and became New England's largest rabbit breeder. Then he went back to doing character readings, using palm readings and handwriting analysis by mail.

But, of all Adam's adventures, his memories of circus life were the best, including the opportunity to have had personal mends like the great Tom Mix, who joined the Sells-Floto Circus when Adam was with that circus in 1929, and Adam's interest in boxing, which his good friend Tom Mix really loved.

And now, as Adam lives his quiet life out in the country, he has written an interesting book that tells of his forty-seven years with his wonderful late wife, Ann, who was a devoted and loving mate. The story tells of what it was like to live with a fugitive and bootlegger husband all those years, and then of her passing in 1980. Adam recounts his loneliness for three years. Adam continues his story by telling how the palmistry reading of a young twenty-one year old girl blossomed into a wonderful friendship of true love and romance, as it can come to one who has lived an adventurous, interesting life. The story explains how, through deep faith in God, Adam could live this strange, unusual and interesting life, so full of excitement, and still remain the happy-go-lucky person he still is. Adam credits all this to the guiding hand of God.

The interesting life story of Adam includes that of his close companion, twenty-two year-old Terry Lyn Bates. Her story alone is well worth the price of the book, as one can see that age alone is not what counts, but the way we live our lives.

The book includes many pictures that tell the life story of Adam. For an autographed copy of *Circus Life and Adventure of Adam Bardy*, send check or money order for \$12.95 to:

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